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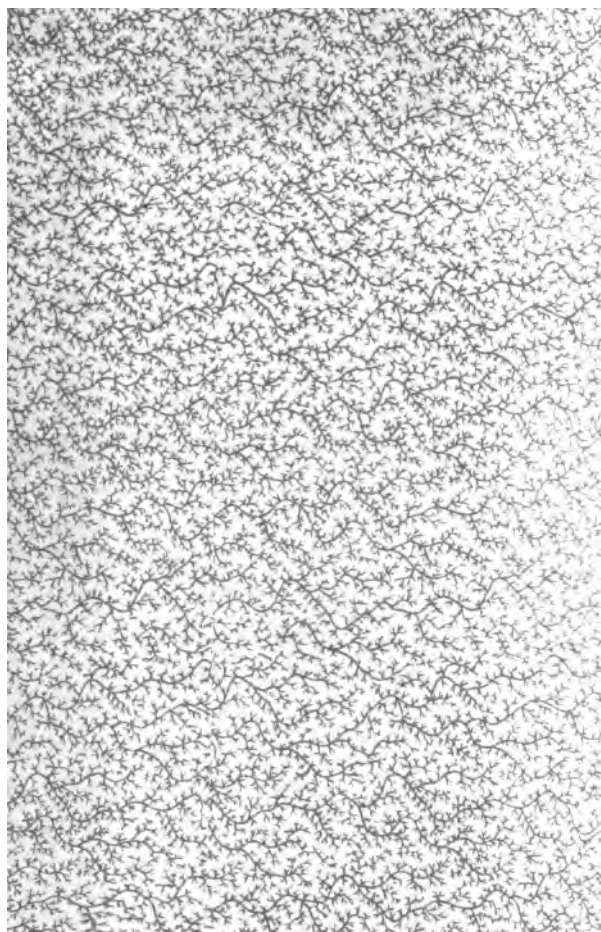
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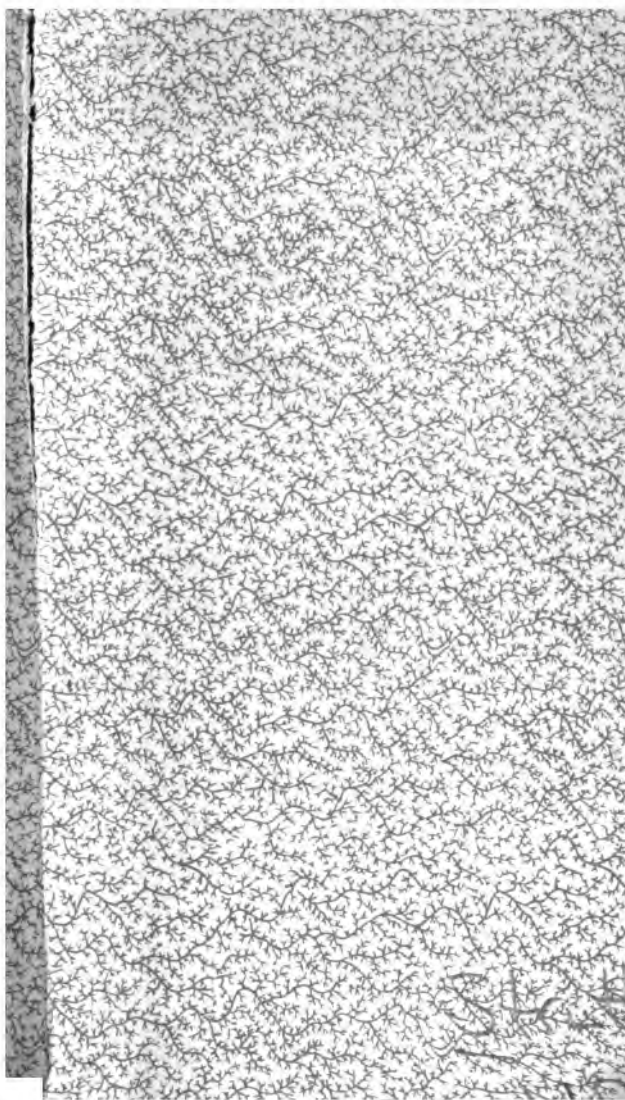
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QUEENHOO-HALL,

A Romance:

AND

ANCIENT TIMES,

A DRAMA.

BY THE LATE
JOSEPH STRUTT,

AUTHOR OF "RURAL SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND," &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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QUEENHOO-HALL;

BEING

A HISTORY OF TIMES PAST.

SECTION VIII.—CONTINUED.

CHAPTER II.

The Tale.

ABOUT a century past, there lived at Hatfield a merry fellow, well known in this village, who followed the double occupation of a tailor and a barber. He was usually denominated the Little Tailor—and by that appellation,*so please you, I will call him. He was much esteemed by his neighbours, not only on account of his skilfulness in his profession, but more especially for his mirthful-

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ness; for, he was constantly whistling or singing, or telling merry tales to please his customers: and if perchance, in shaving, he drew blood of any one of them, he had the method of apologizing so archly, that he seldom failed to send them away in a good humour.—He had but one fault, and that was, he loved a full Can better than his business, and lost many a tester because he was not sufficiently sober to perform the duties of his occupation.—

“By'r Lady,” quoth Hob Filcher, “he was a right honest-hearted lad, and a true man, I warrant.”

“I hold with you there,” answered Toss-pot; “he was one of our own kidney.”

The narrator smiled at the observations, and went on.—“It chanced on a time that the Little Tailor came over to Tewin, as he was accustomed to do occasionally, to work at the farm-houses, and make up such garments as might be needful in the families;

and the story says, he never wanted for employment: but at night he usually gave the good folks the slip, and stole down hither, where he was joined by several of his old pot-companions, and passed the night in mirth and jollity."—

"By the blood of Termagant, he was a pig of my father's sow; a very lad after my own heart!" cried Tossopot.

"It was now," continued the tale-teller, "a few days before the feast of Saint Michael; and the Little Tailor having finished his business at Tewin, determined to purchase a goose, to roast on the Michaelmas-day, which purchase he made; and, after passing the evening here with his jovial comrades, he took up his goose under his arm, and between twelve and one set off by the light of the moon for Hatfield, singing merrily, as he went, with a heart devoid of care, and his belly full of good ale. Now you all well know that the

nearest path to Hatfield is down the warren, and through the farm-yard at Tewinbury.

“ At that time there lived at the farm-house an austere varlet, whose name was Piers ; but he was more usually known by the mock-appellation of Crabtree, on account of the sourness of his disposition. He was reve to the baron Fitzallen, of Mardon ; and assumed great authority over his neighbours.

“ It so happened, that his hen-roosts and capon-pens had been lately robbed, and several of his pigs and his geese were also missing ; for this reason he determined to sit up, and watch for the thief : and on this very night, he, with two sturdy varlets of his household, had placed themselves in a convenient situation to overlook the pullen, and had purposely left the geese in the yard, to give the alarm, in case they should fall asleep ; which actually happened. They had also two sharp dogs with them, to be their guard.

“The Little Tailor, as I before told you, came singing down the warren, and into the farm-yard. When he passed by the goose-house, the geese that were lying before the door, being disturbed by him, began to scream—his own goose answered them—and, before he was aware, got loose, and ran among the farmer’s geese. The Tailor followed his goose, and, after some time spent in the pursuit, caught it again. The screaming of the geese, who were frightened by the Tailor’s running about among them, awakened the three watchmen; and, after the farmer had rubbed his eyes, the first thing he saw was the Little Tailor, in the midst of his geese, taking up a goose, which he clapped under his arm, and was proceeding on his journey without suspicion of harm. The farmer readily concluded that the Tailor had stolen one of his geese; and with his men he pursued, and stopped him as he was about to pass the bridge.—

“ So, so,” cried Piers, seizing him by the collar, “ we have caught you at last : you are the two-legged fox, are you, that has revelled of late so much among our pullen ?”

“ Why, master Piers,” said the Tailor, “ if you take me for a fox, by my fay you are upon a wrong scent. I have got a goose, ’tis true :—but the goose is my own ;—

I bought her to-day,
And for her did pay,
And from mother Bee’s I brought her away.”

“ Tailor, thou art a false knave,” said Piers, angrily ; “ and this tuning and singing will not answer your purpose ; I am not to be gulled by a song ; do you think I am such a fool ?”

“ Marry,” answered the Tailor, “ I did not think you was a fool ; by my fay, you are as Heaven made you ; and Heaven may amend you in good time : but for my goose, I will swear to her upon the Bible book.”

“ Oh, no doubt,” cried Piers, “ a filching thief will not flinch at a lie, nor heed an oath into the bargain.—The goose your own ! quotha.—No doubt it would have been your own, as many of my cocks and hens, and pigs, have been heretofore : but I shall prevent that transfer of property. Go to ; you are a sorry knave, master Tailor, by the rood ! I thought better things of you ; aye, and I would have lent you a noble, or two, or three, on some good pawn, to have bought cloth to have helped you forward with a fair customer : but, marry, the time is gone over : and I will teach you a lesson for filching of poultry :—you shall kiss the stocks, my precious knave, before you are an hour older.”

He then commanded his assistants to take the goose from him.

“ Soft and fair, my friends,” answered the Tailor ; “ you talk of taking away my goose ; but, by the lord of Lincoln, we will have a brush for that. Look you now, my masters,

I will defend my goose : and if you take her,
you shall take me with her ; for nothing but
war and bloodshed shall part us.—

“ Sound, sound the trump,—the clarion sound,
Away to arms—to arms away :
Death stalks the bloody field around,
And hurtles in the dire affray.”

“ Go to, thou drunken knave,” said Piers ;
“ stint this charm, and put down the goose.”
The Tailor answered thus :

“ Not for thy homestall,
Brave master gripeall :

“ And that’s a new tune, I trow.”

“ What !” said Piers, “ shall I be robbed
before my face?—Deliver up the goose.”

“ Why, what a coil you keep,” answered
the Tailor ; “ have I not told you the goose
is mine, bought with a piece of silver !”

“ Out upon you for an impudent, lying lo-
zel,” said Piers ; “ did I not see you take it
up from the other geese in the yard ?”

“ I grant you that,” said the Tailor.

“ And yet deny that it is my goose !” retorted Piers. “ Go to, you are a wilful knave. —Take the goose from him, you varlets.”

The men were proceeding to obey their master ; when the Tailor leaped backwards, and brandishing a hedge-stake which he held in his hand, cried, “ Hold, hold I say ! for, by the dragon of St George, I’ll rap your coxcombs soundly, if you touch the goose :—

And like that stalworth, doughty knight,
My derring-do I’ll wage in fight,
A Tailor though I be ;
But such derreignment, sure, you’ll shun,
Nor overmatch me three to one,
To win the coward’s fee.”

“ The knave is surely possessed ; the foul fiend is in him,” cried Piers ; “ he is either drunk or wode : but this pretence shall not serve his turn : and since he will not put down the goose, I will have him up to the green, and let his knaveship’s heels kiss the stocks.”

“ Hark-ye, master,” cried the Little Tailor, “ I trust you are not in earnest !”

“ So sure as you are a filching lozel but I am,” returned Piers: “ and that you shall find in a short time.”

The Tailor answered: “ I rede you well to consider what you are doing; it will ill become you, who ought to keep the peace, to put an innocent man into durance vile :—

For indeed, bold bowman, I tell you true,
I am not a rogue, for my colour is blue,
And never, oh never will change its hue.”

“ The saucy Jack laughs at us to our beards : away with him ; he shall be well whipped to-morrow ; and then, I trow, he will change his song.”

The Tailor clapped his hands together, and sang this couplet :—

“ Let pity move thy ruthless heart,
And take a fordome wretch’s part ;
Nor let me, guiltless, feel from vengeful scourge the
smart.”

“ Adad, but you shall though, my brave rob-roost,” cried Piers: “ and, in sooth, I

will give the bedel a new sixpence of silver to lay the lash upon thy knave's shoulders soundly.—Away with him to the stocks, where all such varlets ought to be!"

On this the Tailor fell upon his knees, and, with a woeful countenance, placed the body of the goose under his left arm, and retained the neck in both his hands, like the note-pipe of the bagpipes; and moving his fingers as if he were stopping and unstopping the sound-holes, whistled a doleful prelude, and then sang, with a mournful voice:—

“In doleful dumps,
From reckless fortune's thumps,
Your faithful Tailor see:
Mercy I crave;
From foul disgrace me save;
Behold my woeful plight, and pity me.”

Having finished this dismal ditty, he leaped from the ground, and began capering and dancing like a madman; singing to a merry tune:—

“ I can dance it gingerly,
 Or leap it lustily,
 And prance it properly,
 Footing full curiously ;
 What then shall be thought of me ? ”

Which pleasantry, instead of making the farmer merry, excited his wrath more abundantly ; and he began storming at his men for not taking the Tailor away swearing, at the same time, that he should pay smart for all the poultry and pigs that he had lost for a twelve month past. The two men finding their master so angry, laid each of them hold on one of the Tailor's arms, and led him up the warren, singing, as he went—

“ Weep not, my father ; weep not, my mother ;
 For I shall be with you anon ;
 With goose under my arm, betem'd from all harm,
 When the leerless old loord shall be gone.”

When they reached the stocks, Piers, who had brought up the rear, fearing the Tailor should attempt to escape, went to the house of Christopher the constable, and ordered

him to rise, and bring forth the key of the stocks; “for I have got,” said he, “the most wilful knave in ten parishes; who claims the honour of passing the remainder of the night in them; and, ’fore Heaven, I will take good heed he shall not be stinted of that honour.”

Christopher, knowing Piers by his voice, rose instantly; and, on opening his door, was greatly surprised to see the little merry Tailor of Hatfield in custody, and threatened with the stocks: and he exclaimed,—“Is it you, my brave merry man? what mad gambols hast thou been playing, to anger master Piers so hugely?”

The Tailor instantly began singing:—

“Ask thou of him, and he shall tell,
Who did the doleful deed:
He saw the night-hag set the spell;
He saw the infant bleed.—

“Then merry, merry ring the bells:
Come, trowl the bowl about:
Here sprightly laughter ever dwells,
And all her revel rout.”

“Murrain on thee!” said Christopher: “you are so full of your quirks and your japes, there is no knowing how to take thee:—what am I to make of this strange virelay?”

“I’ll tell thee,” cried Piers: “It means that he is a foul filching thief; he has robbed my capon-pens over and over; and now you see that he has got a goose of mine under his arm.”

The constable made answer:—“I am sorry to hear this report of you, master Tailor: you were always well respected in this village; and we all thought you to be another guess-kind of man. Fy, now! give up the goose, and entreat master Piers to pardon the offence; it is not fit that every one should know this misbehaviour: and—”

“Hold thee fast, master Christopher,” interrupted the Tailor; “you speak like a good man and true, and as a friend into the bargain, if it should be admitted that I have

stolen aught from this surly corn-hoarder; but, in very sooth, friend Christopher, this goose is my own; and I will not part with it, unless I be forced to do so: and woe betide the hardy wight that dare abide such foul affray; for he, I trow, will prove the thief: and as for my asking pardon, by the mass, not I; I rede him beware, or I will turn the tables, and play his own game back upon him."

"Do you hear how the ban-dog bays?" cried Piers: "oh, 'tis a lying lozel: by holy St Thomas, the lord of Kent, I saw him catch the goose from my flock; and therefore I charge you whip me him into the stocks; for, he is such a filching one, that if he be permitted to depart unpunished, not a neighbour in the parish will be able to keep a hen, a pig, or a goose: and marry, I trow, if he might have his right, the hang-man and he would be better acquainted."

“An you go to that,” answered the Tailor, “I can tell you, if the arch-fiend Beelzebub had his due, your worship would no longer be grinding the faces of the poor, nor be suffered to skin the flints at Tewin-bury.”

Piers then became furious, and commanded the constable to put the Tailor into the stocks, or refuse at his peril; declaring he was ready to make oath he saw the goose stolen, and would answer for the consequence: and Christopher, contrary to his inclination, obeyed the mandate.

The noise occasioned by this transaction, awakened most of the inhabitants of the Green; who arose, and came to see what was going forward: and among them were several of the Tailor’s jovial comrades. Nothing could exceed their surprise at seeing their merry friend in such an unseemly state: and every one was inquiring what had brought him thither.—

“Hark-ye, my hearts,” said the Tailor, “if you all speak at once, I cannot tell which of ye to answer first. Go to; and, if it be possible, cease your clamour; and I will sing ye a short fit, that shall explain the whole to your satisfactions: but, first of all, I must request, that all of ye do look very serious as I do; and if Maud the spinster there would cry a little, it would be none the worse:—

“Cease, gentle wight,—to mourn for me:
In sorry plight—What though I be,
Bound by the legs; my mind is free;
And here I hold my goose.

BURDEN.

Ah, well-a-day!—Oh!—alas!—ah! well-a-day!

“The bargain struck,—a groat I gave;
It was my luck—this goose to have:
When, home returning, blithe and brave,
My goose escape did make.

Ah, well-a-day! &c.

“Then after her—I ran full fast;
Great was the stir—where-e’er we pass’d:
But I secur’d her at the last;
Nor will I lose my goose.

Ah, well-a-day! &c.

“ Up, up, my men,”—old Crabtree cries ;

“ In yonder glen—my gray goose flies,

And is become another’s prize :”

(For, I had caught my goose.)

Ah, well-a-day ! &c.

“ To stop me soon,—It was his will,—

By light of moon—Up yonder hill

I then was brought, the stocks to fill,

Because I held my goose.

Ah, well-a-day ! &c.

“ But morning light—will soon be here :

And then my right—full fair and clear ,

To master bailey shall appear ;

And I will keep my goose.

Ah, well-a-day !” &c.

The ditty finished, the Tailor thus addressed his auditory :

“ And now, my brave gallants, this gere has gone to very sorry tune ; and all of ye know as much of the matter as I do. But prithee, now, if ye love me, let some one of ye go to the ale-stake, and get me a pottle of warmed ale, with a toast and nutmeg, to keep the chill, dank air from my stomach ; and, for the mercy of good fellowship, pro-

cure a truss of dry straw ; for, joking apart, the ground is ten times more wet than I wish it to be ; and these leg-ornaments are not of the easiest."

His requests were instantly complied with ; and a large houpland was brought, and thrown over his shoulders ; and our jovial host's predecessor, being knocked up, and apprized of the matter, instead of ale, brought his friend a large bowl of mortified clary, made rich with spices. The Little Tailor took a copious draught ; which warmed his stomach ; and he began to laugh and sing, and crack his jests without stinting, keeping his auditory in a roar of laughter.

In the mean time, the surly reve, having made inquiry from the people of the Green, found that the Tailor had actually purchased a goose, which he carried away with him from the ale-house ; and he now began to think that he had carried matters too far : and remembering that the Tailor had told

him he bought the goose of mother Bee who lived on the Upper Green, he sent for her, in order to be perfectly satisfied. On her arrival, she confirmed the Tailor's assertion; and, going to him, (for he still retained the goose,) declared she was ready to make oath, that it was the same goose he had purchased from her.

When Piers heard this, he accommodated his visage as well as he could to a smile; and addressed himself to the Tailor in this manner :

“ How now, man ! Go to, my little merry fellow : you should have told me plainly, without your quirks, your japes, and your quiddities, that you had bought the goose : and gads me, dost think I would have hurt a hair of your head ? Holy St Thomas preserve me, but I have a great respect for you ! Come, give me your hand : I am sorry for what has been done : and call for what you like ; what hinders ? I will pay for it.”

.. On this, the Little Tailor eyed him archly; and, holding up the goose in both his hands, began singing:

“ Now, well ye wot, in wreakful fight
I have yshent the doughty knight,
Revers'd his mighty shield, and quell'd his horse;
Crest-fallen, see, aghast he stands,
A wondrous quest 'chiev'd by my hands,
To make sans pity lout, and feel remorse.

“ However, master Piers, I heed thee not.
We'll talk more on this matter before the
baron in the morning:

“ And he, I read, will no way justify
Thy foul award, by which in stocks I lie.”

“ Nay, nay,” replied Piers; “ think no more about it:—release him instantly, Christopher: he is a true man,—aye, I trust, and as merry as any in Christendom.—Gads me, I was angry, because, man, I thought you had stolen my hogs and my pullen:—but it is all over; and I will be your friend. Come with me to the Bury; I have a rare hogshead

of stinging huffcap abroad, and a rasher of bacon on the rack, to give the beer a zest : and, as I am a true man, you shall make all our Christmas garments.—Go, Simkin,” said he to one of his men, “go on before, and bid the wench lay a faggot on the fire, and take down the bacon ; and we will be with her anon.”

Simkin was much delighted with the order : and, stepping up to the Tailor, said, “By the mass, my little merry man, but my master says well : the ale he talks of is as keen as a fox ; it was brewed, I ween, last October, and will make you as mellow as an over-ripe costard.”

“Go to ; thou art a clod-breaking fool,” said the Tailor ; “I am not to be gull’d with a horn of petty ale ;—I have nought to do with you, or your seely comrade there : but for your master,—

“Let he and I—the ’ventful battle try :
For, one or both of us are doom’d to die :

And deeds of chivalry achiev'd shall be.
 With thimble, sheers, and bar of steel,
 I'll take the field, and make the varlet feel
 My fury :—he shall quell or flee.


“ And now, Mr Christopher,” said he, addressing himself to the constable, “ I appeal to the baron, and am determined to obtain a hearing in the morning. I therefore charge you to see, that this same reve be forthcoming; whom I accuse of stopping me, his majesty’s liege servant, on the highway, and attempting, by force of arms, to take from me my property; and for falsely confining me in the stocks, contrary to the statute.”

“ By our Lady !” said Tom Skinker, “ the Tailor deserves a full bowl of clary; for he speaks like a tall man.”

“ In good sooth,” retorted the host, “ he that takes my little merry man for a fool, shoots wide of the butts; he has made old

Skinflint look grave, and taken him down to the lower tap already."

The Tailor was forthwith set at liberty, and his companions manifested their joy by three loud shouts. The company then went to the ale-stake, followed by the reve and his men. The reve finding, that, by fair speeches, the Little Tailor was not to be persuaded to make up the matter without a hearing before the baron, or his bailie, which he had no relish for, proceeded in another manner; and, by calling lustily for liquor, and pushing about the cann without restraint, endeavoured to make him so drunk that he might forget it, or, at least, be reduced to such a situation as to make it impossible for him to appear against him in the morning; in the mean time, he did not doubt being able to make his own part good. The Tailor, however, foreseeing, perhaps, his intention, was more cautious than usual; and, though he laughed, and sang, and danced all the night, he kept



himself collected, and, in the morning, insisted upon being taken with the reve, in proper form, to Marden, as soon as the hour of audience was come; and, when they were ushered into the baron's presence, he told his tale with so much simplicity and good humour, that his lordship could not refrain from laughing heartily.

The reve, on the other hand, in defence of his conduct, pleaded the circumstance of seeing the tailor take the goose from his flock, which naturally led him to conclude it was one of his geese: he then adverted to the refusal the Tailor made to let him have the goose, and the idle rhyming japes he made, instead of answering fairly and openly on the occasion, to which he certainly might justly impute the inconveniency he had suffered.

When he had done speaking, the Tailor addressed the Baron, saying, "If your ho-

nour will pardon me, I wish to put in a word or two, as my poor wits will permit me, by observing, that master Piers seems to have been wrong in two points; and, marry, the first is this, when I told him the goose was mine, in not counting his own geese; when, I trow, he would have found the number just what it should be; and, secondly, when he had brought me to the green, in not sending to mother Bee, from whom I assured him I had bought the goose, to know whether I really had made such a purchase or not, before he had disgraced me, and my calling through me, by putting my feet into the stocks, as though I had been a thief and a vagabond. The threats of the scourge (for I assure your honour he promised me, in his bounty, a sound whipping,) I look over: he was angry without cause: and how far he may have cause to be pleased with his unseasonable, or rather unreasonable, proceed-

ing, must rest on the decision of your lordship."

"You have spoken to the purpose," said the Baron: "but as the matter originated from a mistake, I trust you will not be severe in your demands of justice. You," added he, addressing himself to the reve, "have been too precipitate in your proceedings, and have thereby disgraced an innocent man, and hindered him from proceeding where his business called him. The offence is a serious one, and, I hope, such a one as I shall not hear of from you again: in the present case, you shall pay him two angels of gold; the one for the disgrace, and the other for the delay you have occasioned; on condition that, on his part, he will drop all contention and animosity, and friendship shall be restored between you."

"With all my heart," said the Little Tailor, "your honour says well: by the mass, I never bore malice with any man: so give me your

hand, master Piers; and though I be poor, I am honest.—Never look so gloomy, master Piers; but in future, remember a Tailor lives by his goose; and if he will not fight for it, he is a sorry lozel, and deserves the stocks, and a good whipping into the bargain.”

In the mean time, the thieves who actually had committed the depredations in Piers's territories, being on the look-out, and hearing the out-cry with the Tailor, followed them to the green, where learning the circumstance that brought them thither, they conceived this to be a fit opportunity for robbing his hen-roosts again, which might be safely done in the absence of him and his men: accordingly they proceeded without delay to the Bury-yard, when they made choice of all his best geese, and other poultry, leaving nothing behind but a few old carrion, which they did not think worth carrying away.

The reve returned from Marden in a very evil humour, having been at a considerable

expence at the ale stake, in plying the Tailor with liquor, without obtaining his purpose; and also obliged to pay to him two angels, according to the award of the baron.—On his entering his farm-yard, he saw his wife weeping and wailing, and Tib, his maid-servant, wringing her hands, as though they had not been well in their wits: and for some time he could not get any answer from them, but alas! and well-a-day! which brought to his remembrance the burthen of the Tailor's song, and was by no means conducive to soften the severity of his temper.

“What,” says he, surlily, “means this howling and scowling? is the grey cow dead, or has Strawberry cast her calf?”

At last the old dame cried out, “we are undone, good-man: the ducks, and the geese, and the hens are all gone.”

“Stint your noise, you fool,” returned he; “the Tailor took but one goose, and that was his own.”

“The foul fiend take the Tailor,” said she: “some other false lozels have been here in your absence, have stripped the hen-roosts; the capon-pens are empty; and the old goose and gander, and a hen or two, are all they have left behind. And thus, forsooth, you have watched to good purpose, like an idle lout as you are.”

The conclusion of this discourse made Piers more angry than at the loss of his poultry: he therefore set upon his wife with great fury, and beat her soundly: he turned Tib, the maid, away, for her carelessness; and swore at the men for not keeping watch, when he himself had taken them away.

And thus, my gentle masters, ends the story of the Tailor and his goose.

The tale being concluded, with the unanimous applause of the rustics, the toppers drop-

ped away one after another, excepting only Tossopot, who having installed the dissour in the comforts of his truckle-bed, returned to finish the night over the beer can, with his drunken host, Hob Filcher.

CHAPTER III.

Gregory discovered, and disgraced.

GREGORY, having reached Queenhoo-hall, had the satisfaction of finding that his absence had not been missed; and in order to escape all observation, he withdrew to his apartment. The first thing that occurred to his recollection, upon lying down in the bed, was the loss of the sheet; but he quieted his mind with the supposition that he had left it in the warren, where it might possibly remain unseen by any one until the morning. Accordingly, he rose exceedingly early, and having prevailed upon the porter to unlock the gate sooner than usual, on pretence of having

some business of importance to transact, he made the best of his way to the warren, where he traced and retraced the whole circuit of his perambulation, scrutinizing every hillock, bush, and briar, but in vain; for the sheet, as the reader well knows, was not to be found there.

He returned to Queenhop-Hall with a heavy heart, and knew not what excuse he should make to the chamberlain for the deficiency of his bed-linen. When the breakfast-bell rung, he joined the servants in the hall, as though nothing had happened. His comrades, however, thought he was graver than usual; and Gervise, who delighted in teasing him, observed, that his wit was as pointless as a pellet from a pop-gun; for although it made a great sound, it did no execution.

The crest-fallen jester replied:—"This, then, is nearly equal with your understand-

ing, which a pellet from a pop-gun can easily subvert."

The men of war, having reached their quarters at Welwyn, made themselves merry with recounting the adventure; and he who had taken the sheet, produced the same as a proof of the veracity of their tale.

It happened, that Jack, the basket-maker who was present at the time, turning it over, recognized the cognisance of the Boteler family wrought with the needle upon it, when turning to the soldier, he advised him to be careful how he disposed of that article; "for," said he, "it belongs to the baron, and was probably stolen by the knave, who counterfeited the apparition."

The soldier was disappointed by losing the price, which he had considered as lawfully obtained; but he did not choose to dispute the point, when he heard that it was the property of Lord Boteler, and especially as the host, who had formerly been a servant in the

baron's household, confirmed the assertions of the basket-maker. "I will, however," said the innkeeper, "upon my own account, give you a stoup of the best ale in my cellar for the sheet; and I will take care that it shall be returned."

The offer of the host was readily accepted by the man of war; and he and his comrade made merry over the ale, wishing they might meet with such another goblin every night.

The innkeeper, in the morning, determined going to Queenhoo-Hall; but, at the same time, he thought it would be best to take the two soldiers with him; for which reason, having obtained leave of absence from their officer, all three of them went together.

Just before their arrival, the under chamberlain had discovered the loss of the sheet, and made complaint to Oswald, supposing that Gregory had secreted it, by way of jest, to give him the trouble of seeking it. Gregory, on his part, flatly denied any know-

ledge of it, declaring, that he had slept all night without it; and said, the under chamberlain ought to be punished for putting such a trick upon him. Oswald was at a loss how to determine the matter; but declared, that the sheet should be found or replaced by one of them.

At this moment, the Welwyn innkeeper entered the hall, followed by the two soldiers, whom Gregory instantly recognised. The sight of two real goblins could not have had a more powerful effect upon him: he held down his head, and stood trembling, without being able to say a word more in his own defence, so that Oswald thought he was seized with a fit on a sudden, or was besides his wits, and began to enquire what was the matter with him, when the soldier, who had helped him from the river, readily recollected him, and, coming forward, thrust out his hand, saying, "How dost thou do, my brave acquaintance? by the sword of St George,

I little thought of meeting with my friend the goblin in this gay company. There my jolly ale-drawer," continued he, turning to the innkeeper, "there is the ghost we caused to uncase last night; and he gives me no thanks for pulling him out of the river."

Oswald, and the whole assemblage of the baron's domestics, were greatly astonished at the manner in which the man of war addressed the jester; his speech was perfectly unintelligible to them, and they stood looking, first at the one, and then at the other, without comprehending the least of the matter. With respect to Gregory, he remained speechless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, nor could he devise any way to avoid the disgrace, which of necessity would follow when the transaction became public; at last, however, he recollected himself a little, and replied to the soldier:—"I shall do otherwise than thank you, Mr Bell-swagger."

The innkeeper then produced the sheet,

which, he said, the soldiers had found in the warren; and that having found the baron's cognizance marked upon it, they had brought it.

Oswald and the under chamberlain examined the sheet, and both declared, that it was the sheet wanting upon the bed of the jester. The production of the sheet added to the surprise of the servants; and Gregory, finding that nothing could prevent the story being made known, making his retreat with great precipitation, ran into his own room, where he fastened the door, and would not open it to any one.

As soon as he was gone, an explanation took place; the soldiers related the story, as far as they knew of it, to the no small diversion of the company, and especially of the pages: Gervise, in particular, declared the jester should not hear the last of it for twice six morns.

After the soldiers had eaten and drank to their hearts' content, and the innkeeper had finished the business which had brought him to Queenhoo-Hall, they returned with satisfaction to Welwyn.

The baron having, in the meantime, a desire to see Gregory, sent for him. The unlucky jester conceiving that the page, who delivered the message, was imposing on him, to draw him from his hiding-place like a bear to the baiting, refused to quit his station; and in order to pacify the baron, who was angry at not being obeyed, Oswald related to him the circumstance of the sheet, and the reason for his self-confinement. The baron could not refrain from laughing at the ridiculous adventure, and sent Oswald with a positive order for him to come into his presence; which order, after some solicitation on the part of the chamberlain, Gregory complied with; and having learned from Os-

wald, that the baron was acquainted with the misadventure, he determined to set the best face he could upon it, and trust to his wit, with the assistance of some portion of impudence, to make his peace with the baron.

When he was ushered into the room where Lord Boteler was seated, he bowed very low; and observing that he did not seem to be very angry, he stood back behind the chamberlain, and clapped his fool's cap upon his head, and thrusting the bauble under his arm, imitated his voice, saying, "I have brought the fool before your Lordship."

Oswald's gravity was much discomposed by the waggery of the jester, when casting the cap upon the floor, he turned round shortly, and said, "Beshrew thee, Jack Sauce, but thou art a knave as well as a fool."

"Take back the knave, I prithee," quoth Gregory, "and leave the fool to me; we both know our parts better than to exchange."

I have not shrewdness to be a knave, and you, I trow, for lack of wit, would make a sorry fool."

"Sirrah," said the chamberlain, "if right were ordered, you would be sent to the whipping-post."

"I hope your worship there will take the precedency of a poor fool."

"Well, sirrah," said the baron, "I see what you are aiming at; and though you certainly deserve chastisement for your malicious foolery, yet, in consideration of what you have justly suffered in the performance of your new character, I am willing to remit what more may be your due. I advise you, for the future, not to indulge yourself with the like mischievous vagaries, which usually end, as they ever ought to do, in the disgrace of those who pursue them. Let me, therefore, hear no more such complaints of your ill conduct, or certainly you shall have

your coat stripped over your ears, and undergo the discipline of a correction-house."

So saying, he withdrew, followed by the chamberlain, and Gregory was left to himself to meditate on the success of his project.

CHAPTER IV.

A Hunting Party—An Adventurer—A Deliverance.

THE next morning the bugles were sounded by day-break in the court of Lord Boteler's mansion, to call the inhabitants from their slumbers, to assist in a splendid chase, with which the Baron had resolved to entertain his neighbour Fitzallen, and his noble visitor St Clere. Peter Lanaret the falconer was in the attendance with falcons for the knights, and teircelets for the ladies, if they should chuse to vary their sport from hunting to hawking. Five stout Yeomen Keepers, with their attendants, called Ragged Robins, all meetly arrayed in

Kendal green, with bugles and short hangers by their sides, and quarter-staffs in their hands, led the slow-hounds or brachets, by which the deer were to be put up. Ten brace of gallant greyhounds, each of which was fit to pluck down, singly, the tallest red deer, were led in leashes by as many of Lord Boteler's foresters. The pages, squires, and other attendants of feudal splendour, well attired in their best hunting gear, upon horse-back or foot, according to their ranks, with their boar spears, long bows, and cross-bows, were in seemly waiting. A numerous train of Yeomen, called in the language of the times *Retainers*, who yearly received a livery coat, and a small pension for their attendance on such solemn occasions, appeared in cassocks of blue, bearing upon their arms the cognisance of the house of Boteler, as a badge of their adherence. They were the tallest men of their hands that the neighbouring villages could supply, with every

man his good buckler on his shoulder, and a bright burnished broad sword, dangling from his leathern belt. On this occasion, they acted as rangers for beating up the thickets, and rousing the game. These attendants filled up the court of the castle, spacious as it was. On the green without, you might have seen the motley assemblage of peasantry convened by report of the splendid hunting, including most of our old acquaintances from Tewin, as well as the jolly partakers of good cheer at Hob Filchers. Gregory the jester, it may well be guessed, had no great mind to exhibit himself in public, after his recent disaster; but Oswald the steward, a great formalist in whatever concerned the public exhibition of his master's household state, had positively enjoined his attendance. "What" quoth he, "shall the house of the brave Lord Boteler, on such a day as this be without a fool? Certes the good Lord St Clere, and his fair lady sister, might think our house-

keeping as niggardly as that of their churlish kinsman at Gay-Bowers, who sent his father's jester to the hospital, sold the poor sot's bells for hawk-jesses, and made a night-cap of his long-eared bonnet. And sirrah; let me see thee fool handsomely-speak squibs and crackers, instead of that dry, barren; musty gibing, which thou hast used of late; or, by the bones! the porter shall have thee to his lodge, and cob thee with thine own wooden sword, till thy skin is as motley as thy doublet."

To this stern injunction, Gregory made no reply, any more than to the courteous offer of old Albert Drawslot, the chief park-keeper, who proposed to blow vinegar in his nose, to sharpen his wit, as he had done that blessed morning to Bragger, the old hound, whose scent was failing. There was indeed, little time for reply, for the bugles, after a lively flourish were now silent, and Peretto with his two attendant minstrels, stepping be-

neath the windows of the strangers' apartments, joined in the following roundelay, the deep voices of the rangers and falconers making up a chorus, that caused the very battlements to ring again.

Waken lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day,
All the jolly chace is here,
With hawk and horse, and hunting spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken lords and ladies gay."

Waken lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are streaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been,
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chaunt our lay,
"Waken lords and ladies gay."

Waken lords and ladies gay,
To the green wood haste away;
We can shew you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size,
We can shew the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;

You shall see him brought to bay,
 " Waken lords and ladies gay."

Louder, louder chaunt the lay,
 Waken lords and ladies gay !
 Tell them youth and mirth and glee,
 Run a course as well as we ;
 Time, stern huntsman ! who can baulk,
 Staunch as hound, and fleet as hawk ;
 Think of this, and rise with day,
 Gentle lords and ladies gay.

By the time this lay was finished, Lord Boteler, with his daughter and kinsman, Fitzallen of Marden, and other noble guests, had mounted their palfreys, and the hunt set forward in due order. The huntsmen having carefully observed the traces of a large stag in the preceding evening, were able without loss of time, to conduct the company, by the marks which they had made upon the trees, to the side of the thicket, in which, by the report of Drawslot he had harboured all night. The horsemen spreading themselves along the side of the cover, waited untill the keeper entered, leading his ban-dog ; a large

blood-hound tied in a leam or band, from which he takes his name. But it befel thus: A hart of the second year, which was in the same cover with the proper object of their pursuit, chanced to be unharboured first, and broke cover very near where the Lady Emma and her brother were stationed. An unexperienced varlet, who was nearer to them, instantly unloosed two tall grey-hounds, who sprung after the fugitive, with all the fleetness of the north wind. Gregory restored a little to spirits, by the enlivening scene around him, followed, encouraging the hounds with a loud *tayout*, for which he had the hearty curses of the huntsmen, as well as of the Baron, who entered into the spirit of the chase with all the juvenile ardour of twenty. "May the foul fiend, booted and spur'd, ride down his bawling throat, with a scythe at his girdle," quoth Albert Drawslot; "here have I been telling him, that all the marks were those of a buck of the first head, and he has

hollowed the hounds upon a velvet-headed knobbler. By St Hubert, if I break not his pate with my cross-bow, may I never cast off hound more! But to it, my lords and masters, the noble beast is here yet, and thank the saints we have enough of hounds." The cover being now thoroughly beat by the attendants, the stag was compelled to abandon it, and trust his speed for his safety. Three greyhounds were slipped upon him, whom he threw out, after running a couple of miles, by entering an extensive furzy brake, which extended along the side of a hill. The horsemen soon came up, and casting off a sufficient number of slow-hounds, sent them with the prickers into the cover, in order to drive the game from his strength. This object being accomplished, afforded another severe chase of several miles, in a direction almost circular, during which, the poor animal tried every wile to get rid of his persecutors. He crossed and traversed all such dusty paths as were likely to retain the least scent of his

footsteps; he laid himself close to the ground, drawing his feet under his belly, and clapping his nose close to the earth, lest he should be betrayed to the hounds by his breath and hoofs. When all was in vain, and he found the hounds coming fast in upon him, his own strength failing, his mouth embossed with foam, and the tears dropping from his eyes; he turned in despair upon his pursuers, who then stood at gaze, making an hideous clamour, and awaiting their two-footed auxiliaries. Of these, it chanced that the Lady Eleanor, taking more pleasure in the sport than Matilda, and being a less burden to her palfrey than the Lord Boteler, was the first who arrived at the spot; and taking a cross-bow from an attendant, discharged a bolt at the stag. When the infuriated animal felt himself wounded, he pushed frantically towards her, from whom he had received the shaft; and Lady Eleanor might have had occasion to repent of her enterprize, had not young Fitzallen, who had kept near her

during the whole day, at that instant galloped briskly in, and ere the stag could change his object of assault, dispatched him with his short hunting-sword.

Albert Drawslot, who had just come up in terror for the young lady's safety, broke out into loud encomiums upon Fitzallen's strength and gallantry. "By'r Lady," said he, taking off his cap and wiping his sun-burned face with his sleeve, "well struck, and in good time!—But now, boys, doff your bonnets, and sound the mort."

The sportsmen then sounded a treble mort, and set up a general whoop, which, mingled with the yelping of the dogs, made the welkin ring again. The huntsman then offered his knife to Lord Boteler, that he might take the *say* of the deer, but the baron courteously insisted upon Fitzallen going through that ceremony.

The Lady Matilda was now come up, with most of the attendants; and the interest of

the chace being ended, it excited some surprise, that neither St Clere nor his sister made their appearance. The Lord Boteler commanded the horns again to sound the *recheat*, in hopes to call in the stragglers, and said to Fitzallen, "Methought St Clere so distinguished for service in war, should have been more forward in the chase."

"I trow," said Peter Lanaret, "I know the reason of the noble lord's absence; for when that moon-calf Gregory hallooed the dogs upon the knobbler, and galloped like a green hilding, as he is, after them, I saw the Lady Emma's palfrey follow apace after that varlet, who should be trashed for over-running, and I think her noble brother has followed her, lest she should come to harm.—But here, by the rood, is Gregory to answer for himself."

At this moment Gregory entered the circle, which had been formed round the deer, out of breath, and his face covered with

blood. He kept for some time uttering inarticulate cries of "Harrow!" and "Wella-way," and other exclamations of distress and terror, pointing all the while to a thicket at some distance from the spot where the deer had been killed.

"By my honour," said the Baron, "I would gladly know who has dared to array the poor knave thus; and I trust he should dearly abye his outrecuidance, were he the best, save one, in England."

Gregory, who had now found more breath, cried, "Help, an ye be men! Save Lady Emma and her brother, whom they are murdering in Brockenhurst thicket."

This put all in motion. Lord Boteler hastily commanded a small party of his men to abide for the defence of the ladies, while he himself, Fitzallen, and the rest, made what speed they could towards the thicket, guided by Gregory, who for that purpose was mounted behind Fabian. Pushing through a nar-

row path, the first object they encountered was a man of small stature lying on the ground, mastered and almost strangled by two dogs, which were instantly recognised to be those that had accompanied Gregory. A little farther was an open space, where lay three bodies of dead or wounded men; beside these was Lady Emma, apparently lifeless, her brother and a young forester bending over and endeavouring to recover her. By employing the usual remedies, this was soon accomplished; while Lord Boteler, astonished at such a scene, anxiously enquired at St Clere the meaning of what he saw, and whether more danger was to be expected?

"For the present, I trust not," said the young warrior, whom they now observed was slightly wounded; "but I pray you, of your nobleness, let the woods here be searched; for we were assaulted by four of these base assassins, and I only see three on the sward."

The attendants now brought forward the

person whom they had rescued from the dogs, and Henry with disgust, shame, and astonishment, recognised his kinsman Gaston St Clere. This discovery he communicated in a whisper to Lord Boteler; who commanded the prisoner to be conveyed to Queenhoo-Hall, and closely guarded. Meanwhile he anxiously enquired of young St Clere about his wound.

"A scratch, a trifle!" cried Henry; "I am in less haste to bind it than to introduce to you one, without whose aid that of the leech would have come too late.—Where is he; where is my brave deliverer?"

"Here, most noble lord," said Gregory, sliding from the palfrey, and stepping forward, "ready to receive the guerdon which your bounty would heap on him."

"Truly, friend Gregory," answered the young warrior, "thou shalt not be forgotten; for thou didst run speedily, and roar manfully, for aid, without which I think verily we

had not received it.—But the brave forester, who came to my rescue when these three ruffians had nigh overpowered me, where is he?”

Every one looked around, but though all had seen him on entering the thicket, he was not now to be found. They could only conjecture that he had retired during the confusion occasioned by the detection of Gaston.

“Seek not for him,” said the Lady Emma, who had now in some degree recovered her composure, “he will not be found of mortal, unless at his own season.”

The baron convinced from this answer that her terror had, for the time, somewhat disturbed her reason, forbore to question her; and Matilda and Eleanor, to whom a messenger had been dispatched with the result of this strange adventure, arriving, they took the Lady Emma between them, and all in a body returned to the castle.

The distance was however considerable, and, before reaching it, they had another alarm. The prickers, who rode foremost in the troop, halted, and announced to the Lord Boteler, that they perceived advancing towards them a body of armed men. The followers of the baron were numerous, but they were arrayed for the chase, not for battle; and it was with great pleasure that he discerned on the pennon of the advancing body of men-at-arms, instead of the cognizance of Gaston, as he had some reason to expect, the friendly bearings of Fitzosborne of Diggs-well, the same young lord who was present at the May-games with Fitzallen of Marden. The knight himself advanced sheathed in armour, and, without raising his visor, informed Lord Boteler, that having heard of a base attempt made upon a part of his train by ruffianly assassins, he had mounted and armed a small party of his retainers, to escort them

hounds Help and Holdfast! I warrant thee, that when the hump-backed baron caught thee by the cowl, which he hath almost torn off, thou hadst been in a fair plight had they not remembered an old friend, and come in to the rescue. Why, man, I found them fastened on him myself; and there was odd staving and stickling to make them "ware haunch!" Their mouths were full of the flex, for I pulled a piece of the garment from them. I warrant thee, that when they brought [him to ground, thou fledst like a frightened pricket."

"And as for Gregory's gigantic paynim," said Fabian, "why he lies yonder in the guard-room, the very size, shape, and colour of a spider in a yew-hedge."

"It is false!" said Gregory; "Colbrand the Dane was a dwarf to him."

"It is as true," returned Fabian, "as that the Tasker is to be married, on Tuesday, to

pretty Margery. Gregory, thy sheet hath brought them between a pair of blankets."

"I care no more for such a gillflirt," said the Jester, "than I do for thy leasings. Marry, thou hop o' my thumb, happy wouldst thou be could thy head reach the captive baron's girdle."

"By the mass," said Peter Lanaret, "I will have one peep at this burly gallant;" and, leaving the buttery, he went to the guard-room where Gaston St. Clere was confined. A man-at-arms, who kept centinel on the strong studded door of the apartment, said, he believed he slept; for that after raging, stamping, and uttering the most horrible imprecations, he had been of late perfectly still. The Falconer, gently drew back a sliding board, of a foot square, towards the top of the door, which covered a hole of the same size, strongly latticed, through which the warder, without opening the door, could look in upon his prisoner. From

by the worshipful Gregory, than I rode after to give her assistance. So long was the chase, that when the greyhounds pulled down the knobbler, we were out of hearing of your bugles; and having rewarded and coupled the dogs, I gave them to be led by the Jester, and we wandered in quest of our company, whom it would seem the sport had led in a different direction. At length, passing through the thicket where you found us, I was surprised by a cross-bow bolt whizzing by mine head. I drew my sword, and rushed into the thicket, but was instantly assailed by two ruffians, while other two made towards my sister and Gregory. The poor knave fled crying for help, pursued by my false kinsman, now your prisoner; and the designs of the other on my poor Emma, (murderous no doubt,) were prevented, by the sudden apparition of a brave woodsman, who, after a short encounter, stretched the miscreant at his feet, and came to my assist-

ance. I was already slightly wounded, and nearly over-laid with odds. The combat lasted some time, for the caitiffs were both well-armed, strong, and desperate; at length, however, we had each mastered our antagonist, when your retinue, my Lord Boteler, arrived to my relief.—So ends my story; but, by my knighthood, I would give an earl's ransom to thank the gallant forester by whose aid I live to tell it.”

“Fear not,” said Lord Boteler; “he shall be found, if this or the four adjacent counties hold him.—And now Lord Fitzosborne will be pleased to doff the armour he has so kindly assumed for our sakes, and we will all bowne ourselves for the banquet.”

When the hour of dinner approached, the Lady Matilda and her cousin visited the chamber of the fair Darcy. They found her in a composed but melancholy posture. She turned the discourse upon the misfortunes of her life, and hinted, that having recovered

her brother, and seeing him look forwards to the society of one who would amply repay to him the loss of her's, she had thoughts of dedicating her remaining life to heaven, by whose providential interference it had been so often preserved.

Matilda coloured deeply at something in this speech, and her cousin inveighed loudly against Emma's resolution. "Ah, my dear Lady Eleanor," replied she, "I have to-day witnessed what I cannot but judge a supernatural visitation, and to what end can it call me but to give myself to the altar. That peasant who guided me to Baddow through the park of Danbury, the same who appeared before me at different times, and in different forms, during that eventful journey, that youth, whose features are imprinted on my memory, is the very individual forester who this day rescued us in the forest. I cannot be mistaken; and connecting these marvellous appearances with the spectre which I

saw while at Gay Bowers, I cannot resist the conviction, that heaven has permitted my guardian angel to assume mortal shape for my relief and protection."

The fair cousins, after exchanging looks which implied a fear that her mind was wandering, answered her in soothing terms, and finally prevailed upon her to accompany them to the banqueting-hall. Here the first person they encountered was the Baron Fitzosborne of Diggsell, now divested of his armour; at the sight of whom the Lady Emma changed colour, and exclaiming, "It is the same!" sunk senseless into the arms of Matilda.

"She is bewildered by the terrors of the day," said Eleanor; "and we have done ill in obliging her to descend."

"And I," said Fitzosborne, "have done madly in presenting before her one, whose presence must recal moments the most alarming in her life."

While the ladies supported Emma from the hall, Lord Boteler and St Clare requested an explanation from Fitz-Osborne of the words he had used.

"Trust me, gentle lords," said the Baron of Diggswell, "ye shall have what ye demand, when I learn that Lady Emma Darcy has not suffered from my imprudence."

At this moment Lady Matilda returning, said, that her fair friend, on her recovery, had calmly and deliberately insisted that she had seen Fitz-Osborne before, in the most dangerous crisis of her life.

"I dread," said she, "her disordered mind connects all that her eye beholds with the terrible passages that she has witnessed."

"Nay," said Fitz-Osborne, "if noble St Clare can pardon the unauthorised interest which, with the purest and most honourable intentions, I have taken in his sister's fate, it

is easy for me to explain this mysterious impression."

He proceed to say, that, happening to be in the hostelry, called the Griffin, near Bad-dow, while upon a journey in that country, he had met with the old nurse of the Lady Emma Darcy, who, being just expelled from Gay-Bowers, was in the height of her grief and indignation, and made loud and public proclamation of Lady Emma's wrongs. From the description she gave of the beauty of her foster-child, as well as from the spirit of chivalry, Fitz-Osborne became interested in her fate. This interest was deeply enhanced when, by a bribe to old Gaunt the Reve, he procured a view of the Lady Emma, as she walked near the Castle of Gay-Bowers. The aged churl refused to give him access to the castle; yet dropped some hints, as if he thought the lady in danger, and wished she were well out of it. His master, he said,

had heard she had a brother in life, and since that deprived him of all chance of gaining her domains by purchase, he—in short, Gaunt wished they were safely separated. “If any injury,” quoth he, “should happen to the damsel here, it were ill for us all. I tried, by an innocent stratagem, to frighten her from the castle, by introducing a figure through a trap-door, and warning her, as if by a voice from the dead, to retreat from hence; but the giglet is willful, and is running upon her fate.”

Finding Gaunt, although covetous and communicative, too faithful a servant to his wicked master, to take any active steps against his commands, Fitz-Osborne applied himself to Old Ursely, whom he found more tractable. Through her he learned the dreadful plot Gaston had laid to rid himself of his kinswoman, and resolved to effect her deliverance. But aware of the delicacy of Em-

ma's situation, he charged Ursely to conceal from her the interest he took in her distress, resolving to watch over her in disguise, until he saw her in a place of safety. Hence the appearance he made before her in various dresses during her journey, in the course of which he was never far distant; and had always four stout yeomen within hearing of his bugle, had assistance been necessary. When she was placed in safety at the Lodge, it was Fitz-Osborne's intention to have prevailed upon his sisters to visit, and take her under their protection; but he found them absent from Diggswell, having gone to attend an aged relation, who lay dangerously ill in a distant county. They did not return until the day before the May-games; and the other events followed too rapidly to permit Fitz-Osborne to lay any plan for introducing them to Lady Emma Darcy. On the day of the chase, he resolved to preserve his ro-

mantic disguise, and attend the Lady Emma as a forester, partly to have the pleasure of being near her, and partly to judge whether, according to an idle report in the country, she favoured his friend and comrade Fitz-Allen of Marden. This last motive, it may easily be believed, he did not declare to the company. After the skirmish with the ruffians, he waited till the baron and the huntsmen arrived, and then, still doubting the farther designs of Gaston, hastened to his castle, to arm the band which had escorted them to Queenhoo-hall.

Fitz-Osborne's story being finished, he received the thanks of all the company, particularly of St Clere, who felt deeply the respectful delicacy with which he had conducted himself towards his sister. The lady was carefully informed of her obligation to him; and it is left to the well-judging reader, whether even the raillery of Lady Eleanor



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

<i>Saxons.</i>	<i>Danes.</i>
ELDOL, or ELFRED.	GODRUN.
EDWARD.	HINGAR.
ETHELRED.	HUBBA.
BERCHER.	WHITGAR.
EDRED.	
EDGAR.	<i>Women.</i>
OSRED.	EGVINA.
WULFSTAN.	ELFRIDA.
BILFRITH.	GERTRUDA.
OSWALD.	
OFFA.	<i>Soldiers, Attendants, &c.</i>
DUNWULF.	

SCENE.—*Near Selwood, in Somersetshire.*



ANCIENT TIMES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Cottage by the side of a Wood.*

Enter DUNWULF and GERTRUDA.

Dun. No more, I pray thee.

Ger. Do but hear me speak.

Dun. All, all the cattle lost!

Ger. Be pacified.

Dun. Three hundred head of cattle yesterday
Grazed in those meadows, and the folded sheep
In yonder upland lawn, all, all my charge,
Are lost for ever. Nay, the little lamb,
Nursed in our bosoms, fostered by our hands,
The outland pagans, with unlawful claim,
Deprived us of. Oh! God, 'twill break my heart.

If I forsake the battle, let me fall
 Disgraceful as a captive, without hope
 To meet, in thy domains, the mighty souls
 Of heroes dead; and quaff celestial streams
 Of hydromel in skulls of those I hate.

Hub. The Saxons have despised the god of War,
 And trampled on his shrine; therefore himself
 Shall bid destruction march, with us conjoined;
 And, from his golden palace, where he sits,
 Surrounded by our ancestors deceased,
 Look down upon us, and applaud our deeds.

Hing. By Odin, and by Thor, the dreadful names
 Of our most potent deities, I vow
 Eternal vengeance to the Saxon race.

God. Ye sons of Lodbroc, from the sacred hill
 Embow' red with many a tree, beneath whose shade
 Your murdered father's breathless body lies,
 Nocturnal shrieks and frightful cries are heard,
 Exciting to revenge; the warrior's spirit,
 Besmeared with gore, arises to complain
 How slow the mighty flood of ruin flows.

Hub. Sleep, sleep in peace, my father; great
 revenge
 Shall calm thy troubled spirit. Edmund bled,
 To thee devoted; and our swords have laid
 His kingdom, all the wide East Angles, waste.

Hing. The gods themselves approved the tyrant's
 fall,

Who murdered Lodbroc, and despised their power.
 Father of battles ! mighty Odin ! hear,
 And grant us vengeance full, as is our hate.

God. The scabbard shall not long conceal the
 sword.

Whether by open war at once commenced,
 Or frequent skirmish to distress the foe,
 Is ours to choose, determine we
 Hereafter, when the trusty scout arrives,
 By us commissioned to explore the strength
 Of our opponents ; for on his report
 Our future counsels chiefly must depend.

Hub. Will then the king, consenting to beguile
 The vacant hour, to music lend his ear ?
 A skilful bard, well versed in sacred song,
 Full fourteen nights, or more, have we retained.

God. Where is he ?

Hub. Near at hand.

God. Command him in.

Hub. Give entrance to the bard.

Enter ELDOL.

Approach, my friend,
 The royal presence ; nor let causeless fear
 Abate thy skill, but boldly strike the chords.
 Harmonious lays can charm the voice of war,
 And soften heroes' souls ! Exert thy powers
 To their extent ; for Denmark's monarch hears.

Eld. With all the skill by Heaven on me bestowed,
I will, with grateful heart, attempt the strain.

Hing. Stop, harper, and before thy song begins,
Inform the king what countryman thou art.

Eld. A Briton born; and Eldol is my name.

Hing. Is thy distress from poverty, or chance?

Eld. What shall I say? O pardon me these tears!
Sad recollection of my former state
Unlocks the sources of my latent woes;
Woes I could wish for ever deep entombed
In dark oblivion. Once, a happy time
Even I experienced; then such tattered garb
Disguised me not. My parents once were great,
The lords of this domain; but, from their seats
And ancient honours driven by the foe,
They sunk in death, and Britain lost her name.

God. What bold opposers, trusting to their swords,
Worked such commotion in this hapless land?

Eld. The Saxon armies, who possess this realm:
For, in a fatal war, time past begun
By Ethelwulf, this Mercian, Elfred's sire,
The waning glories of the British line
Were suddenly extinguished. Woe, the while!
Among the chieftains slaughtered by his arm
My father fell; myself was left alone,
And by obscurity alone secured.
An aged wanderer behold me now,
Entreating from the gentle hands of those,

Whose tender hearts can pity deep distress,
Some small relief; and still their bounty pay
With music and with song, my only meed.

God. if vengeance can make glad thine aching
heart,

Rejoice at full. Right welcome thou to us;
We hate the Saxons. Now begin thy song,
Not doubting such reward as shall become
A king to give.

ODE.

I.

From yonder ever dark and dreary cave,
I hear the loud mysterious notes resound!
List how the thunder roars along the wave,
Or, big with fury, tears the yielding ground!

II.

There, darkling see the lofty king appear—
'Tis Harold, who explores the book of Fate;
His magic spells, the airy spirits hear,
And Odin's will unerringly relate.

III.

"Harold," they cry, "for others woe
Thy conquests far shall spread;
Unsheath thy sword, and charge the foe,—
Mailed, at thy warriors' head.

IV.

" Success awaits thy every blow ;
 For thee shall Odin fight :
 Thy sword shall plunge the harnessed foe
 In shades of endless night.

V.

" Affrighted spectres, from afar,
 In arms ascend the sky ;
 And in the air, a deathless war,
 Forbodes, thy foes must fly.

VI.

" Behold, the wolf sculks forth in day,
 And writhes his jaws with rage !
 Above, the vulture waits her prey,
 And views the hosts engage.

I.

" The air is filled with dying groans—
 Rejoicing. Gondel stands—
 The dying cries, the feeble moans,
 Add fury to the bands.

VIII.

" The keen sword flashes to the sky ;
 The bloody torrents run ;
 Like darkening clouds the arrows fly,
 And shade the beaming sun."

Enter a Soldier hastily.

Hub. How now ; what interruption ?

Sol. Pardon, my lords! commissioned by my chief,
 Earl Whitgar, I approach; and, in his name,
 Intreat immediate hearing.

God. Let him come.

Enter WHITGAR.

Whit. All hail! my sovereign; hail! ye valiant
 chiefs

Of Denmark's realm; your faithful soldier comes
 From danger's emprise, by Odin's aid
 Preserved unhurt;--nor uninformed returns
 Of cause for general joy.

God. The deep-filled bowl
 Shall be thy claim. Relate, then, thy success.

Whit. Great Elfred, England's only hope, is dead.

God. Then mighty Odin makes our cause his own.

Whit. Report prevails, that Edward, Elfred's son,
 In deep despair, has fled the Saxon camp,
 And left his faithful friends without a chief.
 I, through the covert of yon shady wood,
 Approached their lines, in Saxon garb disguised,
 And mingled with the peasantry around.
 A sullen silence in each quarter reigned:
 The outward guards upon their pensive breasts,
 With sorrow and dejection, hung their heads.
 The rudest rustic, who, for want of thought,
 Bids grief defiance, at lost Elfred's name,
 Sighed, as he waved his head, and dropt a tear.

God. O potent Thor! to thee be sacrifice :
 To thee, and Odin thine immortal sire !
 Say on, brave chief, and great be thy reward.
 In what beseeming are the Saxon bands ?

Whit. Destruction watches eagerly their ways,
 Turns as they turn, advances or retreats,
 As they, by sharp necessity compelled,
 Are forced to act. She, brandishing aloft
 Her flaming brand, grins horribly, and points
 To their dead friends, whose breathless bodies lie
 Unburied on the fatal field of blood.
 Those who remain, by unremitting toil
 And marching wearied, heavily sustain
 Increasing duties.

God. Wherefore then defer
 Impending fate ; for conquest is our own.
 This night, my lords, our swords may make secure
 A title to the land. While sunk in sleep,
 Of danger fearless, the unguarded foe
 Outstretch upon the sod their wearied limbs,
 We'll pass yon wood ; and, like a bursting sea,
 O'erwhelm the camp with ruin unrestrained.

Hing. Our oaths secure the truce, till day appears.

God. Great Odin smiles at useful perjury ;
 He hates apostates, and supports our cause.
 Shall we neglect the dictates of the god ?

Hub. Prophetic of success, I vote for war.
 If Elfred rise no more, the Saxon state,

Forlorn of succour, cannot long exist;
 But, like some stately pine on Denmark's shore,
 The growth of ages, and the forest's pride,
 By lightnings blasted, when the hand of Thor
 Is raised with vengeance to chastise his foes,
 Its branches wither, and the parent stock,
 Deserted, rears aloft its ruined head,
 Without a shelter from the gushing storm.

God. Whitgar, be thy care to overlook
 Our guards on duty, and forbid
 All egress hence; lest, on the present truce
 Presuming, some should wander forth our camp.

—You, my lords,
 Brave sons of Lodbroc, summon all the chiefs,
 Ere night, to council, burying in your breasts
 The secret emprise. Let present council cease.
 This day our ever-honoured ancestors
 Devoted to the mighty god of War;
 It shall become us well to imitate
 Their piety. The sacrifice performed,
 We'll meet again; and from the deep-filled horn
 Make large libations, sacred to the god.

Hub. Behold, the harper waits; unfinished yet
 His tuneful strain.

God. Time will not now permit
 To hear him farther; give him his reward.
 Hereafter, when we sit around the board

Of festive mirth, we will attend his song.—
Lead on, 'tis Odin calls, and we obey.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Saxon Camp.*

BILFRITH, WULFSTAN.

Bil. Wulfstan.'

Wulf. Who calls?

Bil. 'Tis Bilfrith; 'tis thy friend.

Wulf. Welcome, my brother soldier; thy return
From Mercia was till now unknown to me.

Bil. Few hours are since elapsed; but, O my friend,
Full soon arrived am I, if what report
Hath whispered in my ear stand fair with truth.
They tell me royal Elfred is no more.

Wulf. Too certain is the truth of that report.

Bil. The fatal hour, in which our monarch died,
Forebodes increase of woe to England's sons.

Wulf. O Bilfrith! should we mourn his loss in
blood,

And bow our wretched heads to meet the grave,
It would not be too great excess of grief;
For, while he lived, oppression hid her face,
And justice smiled, delighted in his reign.

Surely, my friend, he was too good for earth:
For heaven more meet, and heaven hath claimed
its due.

Bil. Our state is desperate.

Wulf. Look around, and see
The direful trophies of our ruthless foes!
See, where our ruined towns and cities rise,
In dusky clouds of smoke! unquenched the fires
Which fed upon their glories! there, behold,
The embattled towers and castles, once the strength
Of this fair island, all by brutal force
Cast down from their foundations, and o'etgrown
With thriftless weeds; the mansions now of wolves
And solitary birds, that shun mankind.

Bil. Too justly hast thou drawn the portraiture
Of our severe distress. Canst thou add more?

Wulf. The foe surrounds our camp; their bands
increase,

As day returns; ours swiftly die away—
Sickness and famine make our numbers thin.

Bil. See, one approaches, stranger by his garb,
And unattended. Wherefore is he come?

Wulf. He sees us not. Let us retire and watch.

[*They stand apart.*]

Enter ELDOL.

Eld. The man, who boasts when present fortune
smiles,

He fears no future frowns,—or prides himself

Above his peers, because prosperity
 Shines round his path, is weak and insolent.
 But, if experience has not taught him yet
 The vast uncertainty of human good,
 Let him survey this dreadful scene of woe ;
 And, from a kingdom's fall, learn how to judge
 Of life more justly.

Wulf. (*approaching.*) What art thou?

Eld. A man.

Bil. We see so much; but say, whence art thou
 come?

Eld. Not far from hence.

Wulf. What is thy business here?

Eld. My instrument may answer that demand.

Bil. Art thou an harper?

Eld. Yes.

Bil. Alas! old man,

In these discordant times, when war demands
 Our wealth and leisure both, ill must thou fare.

Eld. These homely garments speak my poverty.

Bil. Return, my friend; for we have nought to give.

Eld. I ask not alms; I come to see the prince.

Bil. Impossible! he is not in the camp.

Wulf. Have I not seen thee? Yes, I recollect
 Thy features well. Seize on him suddenly;
 He is a spy. In yonder cursed camp
 I saw him yesterday, near Godrun's tent,
 While on our embassy to treat for peace;

Encircled by a crowd of England's foes,
 He sat, and sung to them loud songs of praise,
 Exciting frequent shouts. Canst thou deny
 This charge?

Eld. I wish not to deny the truth.

Wulf. Thou dost confess it, then? before our chief,
 Lord Edred, shalt thou answer for thyself.

Eld. Then be it so.

Wulf. This boldness will, I trust,
 Forsake thee soon.---See here Lord Edred comes.

Enter EDRED.

Ed. Whom have you here, my friends?

Wulf. An enemy.

Ed. A bard he seems.---

Eld. I am a bard.

Ed. Why then a prisoner?

Eld. 'Tis the soldier's will.

Ed. Discharge him, Wulfstan; for we wage no war
 With sons of harmony.

Wulf. But spies, my lord!

Ed. Art thou a spy?

Eld. My lord, they know me not.

Wulf. Himself confesses I saw him yesterday
 Applauded by our foes, and praising them.

Ed. His habit speaks him native of this land;
 For such the Britons wear.---Speak, what art thou?

Eld. A native of this land, as thou hast said.

Ed. And for what purpose art thou come to us

Eld. To do my country service, if I may.

Ed. What service can thy country hope from thee
Whose servile notes are tuned for present pay?
Thy song can praise her fiercest enemies,
While crouching like a slave, at their full boards
Thou dost appease thine appetite, and share
With them the plunder of thy native land.

Eld. Necessity compels me so to do,
Coercive are her laws, and I am old.
But pardon me, without more waste of speech,
I crave a hearing with Lord Ethelred.

Ed. Alas! my friend, nor leisure has he now,
Nor ear for songs. Thy poverty, indeed,
May move his pity; but I will prevent
All application—take the gold I have;
With welcome. Go thy way in peace.

Eld. Permit me to refuse thy gracious boon;
For, though thy humble garments are a badge
Of poverty, far other cares, than those
Support of life at present may require,
Have brought me hither. Somewhat would I say
To Ethelred, well worth his listening to.

Ed. Come here apart. What is it? Tell it me

Eld. Not so, my lord; 'tis for his ear alone.

Ed. Nay, nay, you trifle.

Eld. As I live, not I.

Upon the information I now bear,
The fate of England and her arms depend.

Ed. The fate of England! Follow hastily;
I'll bring thee to his presence; but beware—

Eld. I understand you well; my life shall pay
The forfeiture of truth. I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in OSRED's Castle.*

EGVINA *sleeping*; ELFRIDA *seated by her.*

El. May balmy sleep her mantle gently draw
Before thy sorrows, and exclude from view
All heart-corroding care. Such interval
Of needful rest thy tender frame requires.
But, oh! what cruel anguish still awaits
Thy waking, hapless maiden. From his arms,
Who gave thee being, and with fostering love
Enshrined thee near his heart, more highly prized
Than life or light—by lawless violence
Brought hither. To a parent's loss
Another source of equal grief, I ween,
Is added—absence from a noble youth,
Who dotes upon thee, and by thee beloved.

Eg. Where am I? Oh! my father.

El. She wakes!

Eg. The ruffian bands, with Osred at their head,
Force me away!

El. Ah! now returning grief
Awakens recollection. Here am I.

Eg. Dear, dear Elfrida, such a fearful dream
Disturbed my sleep: methought I saw
My honoured father covered o'er with wounds,
Whose gaping orifices spouted forth
The floods of life. He looked a last adieu,
And closed his eyes for ever.

El. Wonder not,
That grief so recent should oppress thy thoughts,
And lead the wandering fancy, though in dreams,
To retrospective view of past events.
Imagination, giving birth to fear,
Augments the real ills of life, and brings
Her causeless terrors to affright the mind.

Eg. I saw my father fall, by multitudes
Encompassed round! I heard their barbarous shouts!

El. When Osred and his party had prevailed,
Securing us, resistance was forborne;
My uncle's blows on their defensive shields
Fell innocent of hurt, themselves intent
On swift retreat---pursuing them, he fell
Without a wound, and lives to rescue us.

Eg. But, if secure to thee such flattering hope,
Why do those silent tell-tales of thy fears
O'erflow thine eyes? They tell me truly

What passes in thine heart, and how severe
The conflict thus its feelings to suppress.

El. Faithful companion of thy grief, I weep
To see thee so dejected. But, in truth,
I hope—I trust—indeed, indeed, I do,
That joyful tidings are not far removed.

Eg. Hast thou not heard, that evil fortune clings
Around her prey, and binds it from escape
With adamant chains? In slender thread,
A tenure easy broken, we retain
The good, which struggles to evade our hold,
And oft forsakes its owner.

El. To suppress
The voice of hope, by Heaven itself ordained
And planted in our breasts, our comforter,
Belies impatience, and distrust in God.

Eg. How transitory are the comforts hope can
bring

While fear predominates! and oh! what fears
Surround us in this mansion, where we mourn
Our loss of liberty; the haughty lord
Of this domain is Osred—hated name!
For violence of temper, want of faith,
And rude oppression, long have marked his life
With just reproach. My father loves him not;
He knows it well, and meditates revenge.

El. If rightly I divine, far other cause

Than vengeance brought us here. Love hath subdued
The tyrant's heart.

Eg. Hence my forboding fears
Receive foundation. What! must I submit,
With patient ear, to listen when he speaks,
Or bear with suit so hateful? Here constrained
To suffer life, and count the joyless hours.
His frowns;---nay more, the rude indignity
Of supercilious pride, I could endure
More calmly, than his proffered vows of love.

El. I wonder not, that bondage so unjust
Should prove the source of anguish to thy soul,
Torn from a father's, from a lover's arms.
Nay, blush not, lovely cousin; so much worth
And virtue shines in noble Sigebert,
That even envy must herself confess
Him worthy of thy love.

Eg. O Sigebert!

El. How pale you look, my cousin! Nay, weep not;
It grieves my soul to see thee thus indulge
Excess of sorrow. Hark! I hear the voice
Of Osred now approaching. O! beware
Of harsh expression; gentle speech, my friend,
And mild deportment, promise us, at least,
Continuance of kind treatment; rude rebuke
Leaves all to fear.--See, where the tyrant comes.

Enter OSRED.

Os. Still is that lovely visage bathed in tears,
As I approach? and frowns, which owe their birth
To scorn, or, worse! Why ever thus
Repay my vows of love! Turn not away,
Fair mistress of my soul: O! hear me speak;
For sure, that gentle breast, the lovely seat
Of soft affection, harbours no revenge.

Eg. Lord Osred, by what right am I retained
In bondage, to lament, with ceaseless tears,
This absence from my father!

Os. Let love plead
In mitigation of my fault; for love
Constrained me to offend. Thyself so fair,
So charming! that affection knows no bound
When naming thy full worth; and yet thine heart,
Chilled like the frozen stream, feels not one ray
Of tender pity, nor affords one smile.

Eg. The loss of liberty's no cause to smile.

Os. Of this fair castle, lady, thou art queen:
'Tis thine for ever, and its lord thy slave.

Eg. If here my voice bears weight, I now command
The doors may be unbarred, and free egress
Accorded to us. Duty bids me seek
An aged father, by his daughter's loss
Made wretched.

Os. If thou art thus resolved,

Thy faithful lover shall unheeded die.

Go, then, from hence ; hard-hearted maiden, go.

Eg. Farewell, Lord Osred ; may the choicest gifts,

Good angels can bestow, be thy reward !

The noble mind in mercy most delights,

And glories to subdue unjust desires.

Os. And wilt thou go ?

Eg. My father's sorrows call.

Os. Say rather, cruel maid, a rival calls—

A favoured rival, he requires thine haste ;

The father's claim, if truth direct thy speech,

Is far less pressing. Careless of the pangs

Which rend my bosom, on the wings of love,

Like a swift eagle through the liquid air,

Impatient to embrace him, wouldst thou fly ;

But nature has to thee such means forbid

Of flight from hence ; all other flight, myself

Shall certainly prevent thee.

Eg. O Elfrida !

El. Cease, cease, lord Osred, rudely to insult

Defenceless innocence ; the coward heart

Alone delights in insolence, and builds

Its triumph upon weakness.

Os. Do not deem

Those actions cruel, which proceed from love.

El. Can love agree with actions violent,

Or smile in bondage ? No ; the voice of love,

Sweetly persuasive, urges to the heart

Thy supercilious threatenings I despise,
Vain man! and thee.

[*Exit EGWINE.*]

Os. Love grant me patience! but my time will come.
One moment, gentle lady, hear me speak.

El. Beseech you, sir, permit me seek my friend.

Os. I'll not detain thee long; but to entreat
Thy friendly aid—some favouring speech from thee,
In my behalf, may move the angered fair
To pity my distress; and pity is
The parent oft of love. Assist my suit;
And, if I win her, half my wealth be thine.
Accept this sparkling gem, an early proof
Of what shall follow. Nay, refuse it not;
'Tis rich, and will become thy finger well.

El. Unknown to thee my rank, and thence, per-
chance,

This daring insult; thou hast circumscribed
The compass of my mind, and from thine own
Out-traced the narrow limits, else no hope
Had been, by bribes and pompous promises
To bias its resolves. Affront so gross
Excites mine indignation. Osred, learn
To honour what belongs to justice, what---
Add practice to thy knowledge, and be great.

[*Exit ELFRIDA.*]

OSRED solus.

What! schooled by thee, exalted insolence?

Refuse this sparkling gem ! Reject with scorn
 My promised wealth !---Oh ! I will be revenged !
 By force, or fraud, I will possess the charms
 Of Bercher's daughter ; and, when time shall cloy
 My fond desires---though not for love, at least
 To gratify revenge, this haughty girl,
 Her preaching cousin, shall partake my bed.
 So, Bercher, shall I make thee fair amends
 For thy unkind refusal, when I sought
 Thy daughter's hand. Thou didst prevent my suit ;
 Remember that, and sorrow break thine heart.

[*Erit.*

SCENE II.—*The Outskirts of a Wood.*---*Within the*
Scene, " Halloo, halloo ! This way ! What, ho !
Here, here !"

OSWALD and OFFA meeting.

Os. Offa, well met ; what tidings are arrived
 Of those we seek ?

Of. None, faith ! nor like to be ;
 Enchantment, I believe, hath veiled their flight.

Os. How does the prince support Egvin's loss ?

Of. Tumultuous passions boiling in his breast,
 Rouse all his soul to action. Ten long hours,
 With speed unbated, he in vain pursuit
 Has been engaged : nor faints he with fatigue ;

But seems, by multiplying toil on toil,
 To gain new strength; even now his horse o'ertired,
 Fell dead beneath him; but, not so restrained,
 He makes on foot the circuit of the wood.

Os. Alone I saw him. If I might express
 My simple judgment, I should much condemn
 Such rash adventures, by our pagan foes
 Surrounded, and detachments from their camp
 On constant forage—

Of. Greatness frames excuse
 For blemishes, which lay the iron scourge
 On humble backs—But strange it seems to me,
 Who oft have seen the youthful prince at court,
 Where beauty shines in rich variety,
 And splendid rank to beauty adds more worth,
 With eye of cold indifference survey
 The bright assemblage.—Who could then have
 thought

The conquest of his heart an easy task?
 Or, that it should submit to rustic charms?

Os. Long has he wooed Egvina; and I've learnt,
 From good authority, a borrowed name
 Concealed his rank—Lord Edgar joined with him,
 Supporting such deceit—For one he passed,
 Whose office at the court might justify
 His offers to Egvina.

Of. But could he,
 Her father, who himself time past at court

Stood high in Elfred's favour, quite forget
The lineaments of his great master's son ?

Os. Full many years are gone, since Bercher
sought

In solitude repose ; the busy scenes
Of life eschewing. Then prince Edward was
An infant, fondled in his nurse's arms :
The change, produced by such a length of time
Twixt infancy and manhood, well accounts
For Bercher's error ; recollect besides,
Lord Edgar is old Bercher's bosom friend,
And his assertions left no room for doubt.

Of. By such disguisement, why should Elfred's son
Conceal his rank ?

Os. Full obvious is the cause ;
Concealment nurtured love ; for, had the ear
Of England's monarch, but in whispers, heard.
His son's attachment, formed so far beneath
The claim of royalty, as thou may'st judge,
A father's mandate had at once forbid
The progress of his passion.---See, who comes.

Enter EDGAR.

Edg. Saw ye the prince ?

Of. I left him not long since,
Hard by upon the outskirts of the wood :
Here he commanded me to wait his call.

Edg. Fruitless is our search, indeed, I fear,—
The lady will not hastily be found.

Of. The cursed Danes——

Edg. Are innocent, at least,
Of this unmanly outrage; for the garb,
The arms, and speech, of those, who led the band,
Proclaimed them Saxons; and, like petty thieves,
Disguised with vizors, fearful of the day,
The cowards came: An open enemy
Would scorn such base concealment—O my lord!

Enter Prince EDWARD.

Edw. Edgar, my friend, what tidings? nay, speak
not;

I read my sorrows, marked in full extent
Upon thy countenance. Well, sirs, what hope?
O, how inanimate you stand! Fie, fie,
How careless. Did you know her worth, whose loss
Distracts me, or experience half the woe
Which rends my bleeding heart, compassion would,
Securing diligence, to speed add wings.

Of. Command, my lord; obedience rests with us.
Thrice carefully already we have made
The circuit of the wood, nor left unsearched,
Brake, dell, or thicket, but without success.

Edw. Torment me not. O! leave me room for hope!

Enter BERCHER.

Ber. O Sigebert!—Why, dost thou turn away?
Nay, then, I see, Egvin's lost indeed!
Ah! dost thou weep, what then remains for me?
Misfortunes, swifter than the hand of time,
Which draw the thread of waning life too long,
Have reached me on the borders of the grave;
I cannot weep, excess of misery
Distracts me, and restrains the gushing tide.

Edw. Oh! could the vital streams, which warm
my heart,
Redeem Egvin to thy longing arms,
A lover's death should ease a father's woe!

Ber. Thy death, O Sigebert, forefend, ye saints!
A purchase half so precious. Oh! preserve
A hapless maiden, by all human help
Forlorn!

Edw. Yes! she must, she shall be found.
Hence, hence, with speed, my best, my dearest
friends;
In different routs renew the search once more.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. My lord, my lord!

Edw. How now, what means this haste?

Ser. The prison, where my lady is confined—

Edw. Where, where! speak quickly!

Ser. Lord Osred's castle.

Ber. Osred's castle ! all holy saints forbid !

Ser. The tract of horsemen, regularly traced
Through wood and meadow, pointed out the way.

Edw. To Osred's mansion !

Ser. Yes, my lord.

Edw. Go on.

Ser. Fast as the palpitation of my heart,
Urged by unusual haste, will give me speech,
I will go on. A shepherd's boy we saw
Unfolding sheep, and near the highway side :
From him kind words this information drew ;
That, when the evening star shone in the west,
As yesterday declined, an armed band
Of horsemen masked, passed by him on full speed.
Two ladies with them richly dight appeared,
Who with their cries, for succour, rent the air.
The gates of Osred's castle were drawn up
For their reception, and upon them closed.

Edw. Give me thine hand, and know me for thy
friend.

Ber. Celestial powers, who favour innocence,
And guardian saints, protect my hapless child !

Edw. Those, who best love me, fly without delay !
Call hastily to arms the soldiery,
On us dependant in the dells below ;
And thou, the welcome messenger of joy,
Be thou our guide.

Ber. Oh! whither wilt thou go,
 Imprudent Sigebert? be well advised;
 Such rash adventure may perchance retard
 The precious moments; if thou canst obtain
 The royal mandate, to secure the search
 Of Osred's castle, that will justify
 The operation of superior force,
 If peaceful entrance be to us denied.

Edw. Nor time, nor circumstance, can now admit
 Of such delay.

Ber. Neglect not my advice;
 For, though the king be absent, yet the prince
 Delights in justice, and will vindicate
 The cause of innocence. Appeal to him.

Edw. Hence all disguise---Here! in me behold
 Great Elfred's son, the heir of England's throne.
 Nay, wonder not---hereafter must explain
 The reasons of my conduct---duty, love,
 And justice, all uniting, ask from me
 Thy daughter's restoration; give, meantime,
 To hope indulgence. I will bring her back
 To thy embrace, or perish in the attempt.

[*Exeunt EDWARD and his Train.*]

Ber. Why am I left behind? My lord, my prince!--
 He hears me not,---Egvina, O my child!
 Prompt is my mind to action in thy cause,
 And emulates in wish the speed of youth;

But age and its infirmities restrain
The faculties of dust; my sapless limbs
Deny their office.--Ho! What ho, within!
Where are my varlets all?--prepare my horse;
Your lady now is found. To arms, to arms,
And follow me; to aid her or to die! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in OSRED's Castle.*

EGVINA, ELFRIDA.

El. Egvina, lovely cousin !*Eg.* Dearest friend.

El. The female train I've sounded one by one;
 And, when entreaties failed, essayed by gold
 To bribe assistance, but, alas ! in vain.
 One waved her head in silence. Tears bedewed
 Another's countenance. With cautious speech,
 A third declared in whispers, all escape
 Was now impossible. A fourth I tried;
 Toward the doors, secured by massy bolts,
 She cast her eyes; and, pointing to the guard
 Below assembled, sighed as she retired.

Eg. What shall we do ! Perchance, by gifts of
 worth,
 The soldiers, posted in the avenues,
 May yet be gained to favour our escape.

El. The power rests not with them, I'm well informed :

The tyrant keeps himself the keys, which give
Egress from hence.

Enter a Female, hastily.

Fem. If I intrude, impute it to my zeal
In virtue's cause : be, ladies, on your guard ;
For, Osred is informed of your attempt
To bribe escape from hence ; and much I fear
He meditates some ill. I dare not wait
To speak more fully. Heaven protect you both !

[Exit Female.]

Eg. Kind maiden, take this gold. She's gone
in haste,

And in mine ears the warning voice is left—
“ He meditates some ill.”—Portentous sound !
It chills my blood with horror. O, my friend !

El. Take courage ; for the wretch dare not pre-
sume
To act with violence.

Eg. “ Dare not presume !”
What bond restrains him ? Deity itself
He fears not ; and, within his walls entrenched,
Defies the hand of man : full well he knows
The troubles, which involve this suffering land
In ruin, will prevent the swift approach

Of justice armed; and vengeance, far removed,
Awes not the infidel from deeds of guilt.

El. His character I know, and view with fear
His power's extent; but, cautioned as we are,
The danger, which surrounds us, seems the less.

Eg. Against the worst misfortune I am armed.

El. But with that dagger, what wilt thou perform?

Eg. Preserve my honour sacred, though by death.

El. Such desperate deed dare thy weak arm
attempt?

Eg. O, doubt it not! I am resolved on death,
If hard necessity compel the blow.

El. Exalted minds resist the servile voice
Of palsied fear; and, with a steady eye,
The brave undauntedly survey the face
Of threatening danger; coward hearts alone,
And abject souls, depressed with guilt, can feel
The horrors of despair, and vainly seek,
By premature destruction, to escape.

Eg. What earthly power can lay restraint on
thought,

Or hide the glowing blush of conscious shame?
Death will prevent dishonour; death is then
The friend of virtue, and awaits the call
Of courage to secure the innocent.

El. Thy judgment is perverted, or the name
Of murder would affright thee; for no crime
Extends so far its evil, nor is held

In such abhorrence, both by God and man,
 As murder; and of murders, worst is that,
 And most unnatural, when black despair,
 With fury, arms the daring hand against
 Its own existence. Most audacious deed!
 Which at one blow excludes all future hope
 Of pardon. Think what base impiety,
 All Providence denying, must possess
 The desperate soul, that, struggling to be free
 From momentary woe, can rashly brave
 Eternal vengeance, and unsheltered seek
 The ceaseless storm of ruin and dismay!

Eg. Eternity, Elfrida!--Oh! that word
 To reason brings conviction, chills my heart,
 And frightens black despair; abashed I own
 The fault of my impatience, and submit.
 Oh! ever sacred choir of virgin saints,
 Protect an hapless maiden! and thou, shade
 Of my departed mother, if the cry
 Of deep affliction can ascend to thee,
 Assist thy daughter with an angel's prayer!

El. Prepare then for the conflict--Osred comes.

Enter OSRED.

Os. How like a captured bird, with sullen pride,
 Perversely dost thou shun the friendly voice
 Of love, inviting thee to joys unknown!

Cannot my faithful services ensure
Some ground, at least, for hope?

Eg. I answer, no.

Os. How swift thou art unkindly to reply!
To pity, how averse! My soul is thine,
And all the ardour of expectant love
Boils in my veins. Be wise, be wise, in time;
Contempt may lead to deeds of violence,

Eg. Tyrant, forbear thy rude insulting speech.

Os. Tyrant! Hah.

Eg. Elfrida, dear Elfrida!

El. Oh! pity, Osred, injured innocence.

Os. If all my wealth could purchase her free
smiles,

I'd court the fair exchange, and pride myself
In poverty more happy than a king;
But cold contempt blights all my softer hopes,
And scorn repays my service; yet, I know,
Her haughty soul descends to servile chains;
A base-born peasant's humble suit outweighs
The offers, rank can make; shameless, on him
She lavishes affection lowly prized.

Eg. Bear witness to this falsehood, O my friend!

Os. I know him well, unworthy of thy love.

Eg. Unworthy! Osred!

Os. Yes, thy paramour.

Eg. Ungenerous insult! were he present now,
Base-born, or peasant,—and in arms arrayed,

Unmanly fear would instantly restrain
Thy haughty speech, so bold in his reproach.

Os. Too far presume not on the privilege
Of fair indulgence, granted to thy sex.

Eg. The patience of a coward must resist
Such arrogance, defying death itself,
Weighed with an answer to assert its right.

Os. No further let us wage this war of words;
For I will own myself far better pleased,
Not blushing in confession, to behold
Thy charms, Egvin, and indulge the hope
Of pleasures yet to come, possessing thee,
Than with the triumphs conquest can bestow.

Eg. Is this the language of a valiant heart?

Os. Such sacrifice I make to love and thee.

Eg. To love? to indolence and heartless fear,
Say rather, Osred, and confess the truth.

Os. I'm armed with wondrous patience, to endure
Thy scornful speech; so much thou must confess.
But let's no longer trifle with the time;
Each moment brings reproach for pleasures lost:
Retire, Elfrida. We would be alone.

Eg. By all the sacred ties which bind the heart
Of dearest relatives, by all the claims
Of friendship and of love, forsake me not.

El. I will not leave thee; be not so alarmed.
In pity, Osred, grant us to retire.

Os. What childish affectation ! Why indulge
Such groundless fears ? love meditates no ill.

El. Ungentle speeches gave those fears their birth :
But if, as thou hast said, thy bosom glows
With generous love, permit us to retire.

Os. Scorn glistens in her eyes, and well I know
The humour of the sex ; 'tis anger makes
The damask blush upon her cheeks turn pale.

El. For pity's sake forbear unjust reproof ;
Sufficient are the griefs already felt,
And new to her. Oh ! leave us to ourselves.

Os. Prudence forbids that favour, and requires
Immediate separation. I have learnt
Your machinations to effect escape.

El. Can justice blame us ?

Os. Be that as it may,
Such double counsels I must now prevent..
Elfrida, thy apartments are prepared ;
Attendants wait without for thy commands.

El. I will not go ; I will not leave my friend.

Os. Resist me not ; nay then I'll force thee hence..

El. Help, help, for mercy's sake !

Eg. Die, tyrant, then. [Stabs him.

Os. I'm wounded, O ye Gods, wounded by thee !

Eg. Support me, dear Elfrida ; I am lost,
And all the evils, my foreboding fears
In expectation formed, fall on my head.

El. Protecting saints and angels, aid us now !

Os. What vain expence of breath! what idle prayers!

The guardians you invoke, forsake your need;
 And chance, the mighty goddess I adore,
 Forefends misfortune. From a wound so slight
 Small evil can ensue; this scarf will serve
 To stop the bleeding. Stubborn, haughty girl!
 A deed so desperate demands revenge.—
 Who waits within?

Enter two Servants.

Thou female serpent, in a dove-like form,
 Auxiliary of murder, thou shalt feel
 My early vengeance. Seize upon her, slaves.

El. Osred, upon my knees—

Os. Away, away!

Lest that fair lenity, which grants her life,
 At love's request, should not extend to thee.

El. For life I plead not; I'm for death prepared.

Os. Indeed, so bold! perchance, he's near at hand.

El. Strike, tyrant, strike!

Os. Begone, ye slaves, begone!

El. See, see, she faints; assist her; let me stay
 One moment only!

Os. On your lives begone.

[ELFRIDA is forced out.]

Eg. Cousin, friend, Elfrida—

Os. Cease this tumult.

Eg. In pity, Osred, hear my last request;
 Nor blend the guilty with the innocent:
 The thought, the desperate deed, was all my own;
 Elfrida bears no blame, be mine alone
 The punishment, but let my friend escape.

Os. Love pleads in thy behalf, ungrateful maid,
 And silences the voice of just revenge;
 Yield then, fair charmer, to my fond embrace,
 And save thy friend.

Eg. Oh! take my forfeit life.

Os. Talk not of death, but love; for love thou'rt
 formed;

And, thus encircled in mine arms, I clasp
 All that is dear on earth.

Eg. Forbear, rude man.

Os. All struggling is in vain.

Eg. Help, help, oh help!

Enter a Servant, hastily.

Ser. My lord, my lord!

Os. Base slave, what insolence?

Ser. Escape, my lord, they come.

Os. Dog, as thou art, who comes?

Enter EDWARD, attended.

Edw. Behold, and tremble!

Os. Oh! ye gods, the prince!

Edw. Secure the lawless ruffian.

Os. Cursed chance !

Eg. Oh Sigebert ! *[Faints.*

Edw. She faints, by heaven she faints !

Look up, sweet angel, cast a look on me ;

'Tis Sigebert who calls. My life, my love !

Oh ! she is gone ; some water quickly, friends.

Sharp torments, villain, soon shall make thee howl.

Os. I dare thy worst ; curse on my wayward stars.

Edw. Soft, she revives, give air ; yes, she revives !

Stand further back ; look up, dear suffering saint.

Eg. Where am I, oh ! What visions have oppressed

My labouring mind ! preserve me, blessed saints !

Ah me ! I'm lost. The fiend appears again.

Edw. At sight of thee, her fainting fit returns,
Inhuman tyrant.

Os. Osred is my name ;

And, were I not withheld, this arm should teach

Thy tongue restriction, overweening boy.

Edw. Such punishment as justice, much provoked,
Demands severely, shall be thy reward.

Enter ELFRIDA, and EDGAR.

El. Where is Egvinas ? Dearest, lovely, friend,

From my confinement freed, to thy embrace

I fly. How's this ! Protect me, O ye saints !

The livery of death, pale as the snow

Which falls from heaven, o'erspreads her countenance :

Give me her hand.—Sweet cousin, answer me.

Edw. Dear, dear, Elfrida, every effort use
To calm her mind, and by degrees restore
Her agitated reason.

El. She revives ;
The damask bloom glows on her cheeks anew ;
Her pulse is quickened—some short interval
Of rest she needs. Now gently in your arms
Support her, maidens ; the adjoining room
Is open to the air, convey her in.

[*EGVINA is borne off.*]

Edw. Angels and holy saints reward thy care !
Caitiff, these evils owe their birth to thee.

Os. I would they were increased. A false report
(Curse on its author) taught me to believe,
That Osred's rival was a rustic hind,
Base-born, and meanly nurtured in the woods :
As such I feared him not ; but trifled time,
Time, that full vengeance claimed. Fool that I am,
Security has proved my mortal foe.

Edw. Barbarian void of mercy, thou shalt die.

Os. I know I shall ; but, stripling, not by thee.
Unhand me, while I speak ; for this right arm
Is death's sufficient agent—see the proof.

[*Stabs himself.*]

Edw. Seize hastily the dagger ; stop the blow.

Edg. 'Tis all too late. My lord he bleeds apace.

Os. Yes, beardless boy, I die in thy despite:
And may the fiends of hell, if fiends exist
To plague mankind, assist thy ruthless foes,
Destroy thy nation, and revenge my death
Ten-fold, at least, on thy devoted head!
More I would curse, but oh! my fate forbids.

[*Falls.*

Edw. Take hence the body; and, if so much love
Exists among his slaves, forbid them not
To lay it in the grave; few tears, I ween,
Will grace the hated tyrant's obsequies.

Enter a Female Servant.

How fare's the lady?

Ser. Now returning life
Smiles on her countenance. She asks for you.

Edw. I come, I come. Oh Edgar! oh my friend!
Prepare for our departure, from this place,
Polluted with its worthless owner's blood;
Let speed direct us. Demons all accursed,
And beings ominous of future ills,
'Tis said, claim residence, where unatoned
The cries of justice rise at murder's call.

SCENE II.—*The Tent of ETHELRED, in the Saxon Camp.*

ETHELRED, ELDOL.

Ethel. A deed so bold, and crowned with full
success,

May well astonish me. Proceed, old man.

Eld. Such terms of peace, as all endurance passed,
The Danes proposed; the truce, which smiles on
you,

Gains them advantage: from Northumberland
New forces are expected: yesternight
Their king arrived from Mercia; with him came
Three thousand sons of Denmark, best approved
For valour, and experience in the field.

Ethel. Report conformable hath reached the camp.

Eld. The Danes this day rejoice for Elfred's
death.

Ethel. So suddenly acquainted with our loss?

Eld. The tidings of misfortune mount the winds,
And post with speed unbated to the ear:
Good fortune travels, with a snail-like pace,
Through devious ways uneasy of access,
And often comes too late. The Danes resolve
On instant war.

Ethel. Then are we lost, indeed!

Eld. Let not despair, like an untimely frost,
Chill the fair bud of hope, which glory bids

Eld. My royal master loved me, though I'm poor.

Edw. Oh ! we have touched upon the fatal
string ;

The bard is mad.

Ethel. Indeed, I fear as much.

Eld. Approaching hours will bear sufficient proof,
That no insanity affects my mind ;
No wayward turn of speech, too oft indulged
By those who deal in fiction, sways my tongue :
Then hear me speak.---My lord, thy father lives.

Edw. What say you ? Speak again.

Eld. Thy father lives.

Edw. All gracious heaven ! what must I think
of this ?

Eld. From him I come ; his royal mandate bear.

Edw. Oh, let me fly to meet him !

Eld. Needless haste !—

Returning evening gives him to the camp.

Edw. May I believe thee ?

Eld. If my speech be false,
I crave no mercy ; death be my reward !

Edw. Hope, fear, and joy, at once distract my
mind ;

I know not what to think, nor what to say :—
Speak once for all, old man ;—Where is the king ?

Eld. That interdicted secret must not yet
Escape my lips.

Ethel. Mysterious is thy speech.

Edw. All wrapped in doubt. Beware, old man,
beware.

Eld. This night yourselves shall witness the re-
turn

Of England's king ; in perfect health he comes
To your assistance : Nay, I fable not ;
For falsehood cannot give advantage weight
To one within your power, when all escape
Is made impossible. Old as I am
And poor, the love of life has yet its charms,
Sufficient for endurance. God forefend,
I should by evil deeds accelerate
The few remaining sands, that time has left ;
They fall full swiftly of their own accord !

Edw. Is then the son of Elfred, by decree
So harsh, forbid to hail his father first,
To kneel before him, clasp his honoured knees,
And bid him welcome, with a zeal inspired
By filial duty, ere the shouting crowd
Express their vulgar triumph ? O my sire,
How lightly hast thou prized thy Edward's love !---
But, I submit.---And, if in truth you bear
The mandates of the king, let them be known.

Eld. Convene to secret council all the peers
And leaders of the army : being met,
In the full presence, I will then unfold
My whole commission. Pardon, if I add,

The worth of time forbids undue delay ;—
And urgent is my royal master's charge.

Ethel. On me devolves the care to see performed
The sovereign's high behest ; nor shall neglect
Be mine accuser, when himself shall come.

Edw. But, double diligence will aid dispatch ;
I'll join thee, Ethelred.

Eld. One moment grant
Of speech in private. If with England's heir
Experience, clothed in rags, may dare to plead.

[*Exit* **ETHELRED.**]

Edw. For England's welfare, what would'st thou
impart ?

Eld. Give promise, first, with patience to endure
The infirmity of age, for ever prone
To urge its counsels freely ; then I'll speak.

Edw. Wisdom attends on age, and claims from
youth
Attentive hearing.—Speak without reserve.

Eld. Know then, 'tis whispered here that *Elfred's*
death,
Confirmed by frequent bruit, and believed,
Affected not his son ; he shed no tears,
The shining tribute which humanity
Might justly claim, without the stronger ties
Of filial duty, even from the eyes
Of rustics most unnurtured :—No, nor gave

The simple hour to such a show of grief
 As decency required ; but, all his soul
 Devoted to his sports, and England's wrongs
 With cold indifference his eyes surveyed ;
 And truant-like, deserting honour's cause,
 The faithful guardians of the realm he left ;
 (Who, clad in arms, watch hourly for her good :)
 And, at a lady's beckoning, fled the camp.

Edw. Presume no farther ; thou art saucy, bard ;
 Indulgence pressed too far gives place to wrath.

Eld. Canst thou not bear this searching from the
 hand

Of one unknown ? how wilt thou answer, prince,
 A father's chiding ? good my lord, I've done.

Edw. 'Tis time thou hadst.---Here, or within, repose ;
 I shall return anon : and then be sure,
 That thou art perfect ;---think on that, old man.

[*Exit* EDWARD.]

Eld. When the full tide of youthful blood flows
 high,

And headlong passions stimulate the mind
 To eager action---judgment moves too slow
 For such unbridled speed, and soon is left
 Unheeded in the rear. What youth approves,
 Experience oft condemns---and must condemn
 In thee, young prince, on whom devolved the charge
 Of England's safety ; yet the public trust
 Thou hast neglected, to redress the wrongs

Of private life, which delegated power
Had equally performed. Exalted rank
Claims from expectance public services
Proportionably great. The man who dares
Against adversity make bare his heart,
And struggle bravely through the rising storm
His country's good supporting, and disdains
All meaner views, to late posterity
Shall blaze in glory, like the noon-tide sun,
By stars surrounded, and eclipse their fame.

[

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Saxon Camp.**The Saxon Chieftains assembled in Council.*

Edw. What more, my lords, the minstrel can
reveal,

Yourselves shall hear. But, that my father lives,
He speaks so confidently, I am led
To give him ample credence---though the hope
Of good, most earnestly desired, oft gives
To circumstances slight, and void of proof,
More weight, than judgment freely exercised
Will readily allow.---Call in the Bard.

Enter ELDOL.

The noble lords and chieftains of the realm,
Assembled here at Elfred's high behest,
Expect from thee his mandates.—

Eld. To you, my lords, whose noble deeds in arms
 Exceed the blazonry of feeble words ;
 Whose unremitting ardour in the cause
 Of Christian faith, and violated rites.
 Of heavenly liberty, have yet preserved
 This shattered kingdom, and so long upheld
 The waning glories of her regal state—
 To you, with heart-dictated gratitude,
 The king commends his greeting and his love.

Ethel. Let but our dear, our honoured, monarch
 come

Himself, to lead the battle---we will make
 One effort more, and bravely fall with him,
 Or bind triumphant laurels round his brow.

Edw. For death or liberty, we'll draw the sword—
 Nor sheath it more, till ample conquest crowns
 The bloody toils of war---and new-born peace,
 Shall stretch her healing pinions o'er the land.

Goun. On death or conquest we are all resolved.

Edw. Exalted chieftains of this suffering state,
 Full often has your valour in its cause
 Been tried severely, and ne'er shrunk from proof;
 No doubt remains, but deeds of victory
 Await the future fight. Now recollect,
 The present time is precious, and demands
 Full consultation ; for the hours are few
 To us assigned of safety.

Eld. Few, indeed,

If all were known, are those allotted hours.

Ethel. Till twice the morning greets the rising sun.

Eld. Another morning's sun shall not arise,
Unconscious of the blood which war demands.

Ethel. Which war demands? I understand thee
not.

Eld. There passes not an hour, but elevates
The hope, which Denmark's ruthless sons have
formed,

Of conquest near at hand--the knowledge gained
Of England's weakness, joined with firm belief,
That death has closed our royal master's eyes,
O'erbiass'd their late councils--'tis resolved--
Advantage taking of the granted truce,
At midnight to attack the sleeping camp.

Edw. Our answer unreturned--the treaty still,
Confirmed by oaths, remains inviolate.

Eld. Five winters past, who has forgot the time?
Our monarch held in chains the Danish chief;
For his redemption, oaths on oaths were sworn--
And all the hallowed rites the priest performed,
Which their own superstitious faith forbids,
On pain of future curse, to violate:
A golden bracelet, tinged with human gore,
Was held in witness o'er the sacred fire;
While peace, eternal peace, with England's sons
They vowed to keep; but, ere the dying flames

Were quenched upon the altar, they unsheathed
The hostile sword, and filled the land with blood.

Edw. The recent evils, which distress this realm,
Keep fresh in memory with us that breach
Of public faith, from whence they all derive
Their fatal origin---At midnight then---

Eld. The morning councils have determined so.

Edw. And by what secret path will they approach?

Eld. Through yonder wood in silence they will
come.

Edw. Our watch shall then be doubled, and in
arms

We'll wait the approach of morning.

Eld. Rather strive,

By counteractive policy, to turn

The ruin aimed at you upon themselves.

Edw. What prospect hast thou formed of such
success?

Eld. The secret covert of yon woodland shades,
Above the usual passes, will secure
An ambush, planted to annoy the rear
Of Godrun's army, while engaged in front,
The Saxon camp attacking.

Edw. I approve

The salutary council.

Edg. So do I.

Ethel. Unknown to us, my lords, this stranger bard;
And falsehood often wears the garb of truth.

Edw. Let not suspicion, hasty to condemn,
Close up the ear from council. Grant it true,
The minstrel seeks, by fraudulent discourse,
To give the foe advantage. On our part,
Can active diligence, with caution joined,
Of danger be productive?

Ethel. Yet, I fear---

Eld. Nay, then, 'tis time, since my firm faith
you doubt,

To manifest a voucher on its side,
Sufficient to confirm it. View this seal,
Well known, my lords, to you. It is the king's;
Survey it well; within the parchment's folds
His royal mandates are in full contained.

Ethel. It is indeed his seal.

Edw. Oh! give it me.

It is, it is; what need we further proof?
First, let me kiss the wax impressed by him,
Who claims my duty. Now, I break the seal,
Impatient to survey the dear behests
Of our liege lord. It is his writing all.
"Beloved son, this night expect to see
Thy father, and thy king."---What shall I say?
The bursting torrent of tumultuous joy
O'erwhelms at once my agitated thoughts;
I cannot reason; but am led to doubt
Reality itself. Oh! pinch me to the quick,
That I may be convinced I do not dream.

Eld. Forbear these transports; for, the present
time

Is highly precious, and the king's commands
Important to be known; remember that.

Edw. Excuse, excuse, the feelings of my heart;
'Tis Elfred writes, and Edward is his son :
So urgent on affection is the claim
Of filial duty. I, perchance, appeared
Forgetful of respect; excuse me, pray :—
“A thousand light armed troops,” so writes the king,
“Whose courage frequent action has approved,
First set apart; and, when the shades of night,
In fit concealment, shroud from distant view
The soldiers' motion, summon silently
The bands to arms, and wait, arrayed for war,
The royal presence.”

Ethel. Yes, with joyful heart
Our monarch's high behests shall be obeyed.

Eld. Yet one commandment more I have to urge,
Enjoined me by my master. 'Tis his will,
The secret, that he lives, and will return,
Escape not from your lips; the common ear
Must not be trusted lightly. Spies surround
The camp; and, should the tidings once transpire,
Our foes may catch the bruit, and improve
The time to their advantage.

Edw. To prevent
Such misadventure, noble chieftains all,

Let silence lock the secret in your breasts,
Till ripened time permit us to proclaim
The joyful tidings with security.

Coun. Doubt not, my lord.

Edw. There is no room for doubt:
The council is discharged. My lords, farewell.
Nay, wave all ceremony. Duty calls,
And diligence will give my honoured sire
The best of welcomes. Once again, farewell.

[*The Council go out.*]

Minstrel, thy hand. Come on, be thou my guest,
Till heaven in mercy shall again restore
To me a father, to the state a king.

SCENE II.—*The Tent of EDWARD, in the Saxon
Camp.*

BERCHER, EGVINA.

Ber. Weep not, my daughter; he was false, yes
he;

This Sigebert was false, and we deceived;
A subject, not superior to our rank,
We held him yesterday. Behold him now
The heir of England's throne, if not our king!

Eg. Could perjured falsehood wear so fair a face?

Ber. Hypocrisy, Egvina, knows no task

Eg. You name the heir of England; such high rank
Suits not, my lord, with rustic innocence.

Edw. Yes, innocence, and virtue, though they
bloom

In wild retirement, lose not of their worth,
Transplanted from their native humble soil,
But add to pomp fresh lustre. If unknown
The name of Edward, call me Sigebert.

Eg. My wayward fancy fabled once to me,
That Sigebert existed; nay, I own
I loved the phantom. Yes, I dearly loved;
If he exists, and should be known to thee,
Go, bid him triumph o'er a broken heart;
And to the mighty deeds, which claim renown,
Add that.—

Edw. Wherefore is this unjust reproof?

Eg. To conscience I appeal; for conscience best
Can give the explanation.

Edw. By my hope——

Eg. Swear not, my lord, nor add to perjury
Greater excess. I fear the urgent claim,
Repentance makes, already will demand
More joyless hours of penance to atone,
Than years on years can give.

Edw. What can atone
For cruelty like thine? Why, tell me why,
In phrase ambiguous, and hints obscure,
Am I accused? for, if unwittingly

I have offended, in its full extent
 Declare my guilt, and give in penance hope.

Eg. In pity leave me.

Edw. Leave me, didst thou say?

Eg. For ever leave me.

Edw. Sure, there was a time---

Eg. There was, indeed, a time---a fatal time--
 When hope gave promise in my hapless breast
 Of future joys, and bid the prospect smile;
 But disappointment now, and grief, obscure
 The gilded vision. Farewell for ever.

Edw. And wilt thou go, indeed, in anger go,
 Nor plainly indicate the latent source
 Of all this passion? Is not thy firm faith
 Betrothed to me? Speak plainly, and speak truth.

Eg. I answer, no; 'twas Sigebert, who won
 My virgin heart; 'tis he, who claims my vows.

Edw. To Edward grant, what Sigebert may claim.

Eg. No, never.

Edw. Never!--art thou so unjust?

Eg. There shall not need a spirit from the grave
 To judge between us, nor the heated share,
 Truth's awful ordeal, to convince the world,
 Which of us is unjust. Oh, cruel man!
 If love had equalled all you have professed
 In my behalf, the obstacles, which bar
 A union disproportionate like ours,
 Stand out of reach, and cannot be removed.

Edw. My power is full sufficient to remove
All obstacles, and place thee on the throne.

Eg. Alas, my lord, high rank and noble blood,
With other dower than simple innocence,
Are with a queen expected. Scorn pursues
Ambitious poverty, when placed on high;
And looks askance on royalty itself,
When royalty descends to match its worth
With low degree.

Edw. Is excellence like thine
A grace without esteem? no, on my soul,
To wealth and rank superior, it commands
Just admiration; and will brighter shine,
The more it is exalted.

Eg. Truce, my lord,
To flattery, and wave all waste of words;
Perchance our honoured lord, great Elfred, lives.

Edw. The guardian saints, in mercy to the state,
Restore its king; my father lives indeed
To bless his son, and authorise our love.

Eg. To cast thee from his arms, and frown me dead,
When he shall learn thy weakness.

Edw. Such a doom
Destroys me too; for all parental love
Must be extinguished in the monarch's breast,
If, after I have pleaded on my knees,
The cause of pure affection, he can pass,
Without remorse, a sentence so severe.

Eg. If it be true! if it be true, indeed,
That I am still beloved! beloved by thee!
Why so unlike himself came Elfred's son,
A suitor for my heart? his glories veiled
In deep eclipse, like one, who, bent on fraud,
Sculks in the shade, and shuns the light of day.

Edw. Had thy dear honoured father known in me—
The son of Elfred, when I first assayed
The conquest of thy heart——

Enter BERCHER, overhearing.

Ber. Aye, had I known
That fatal secret thou, a parent's care
Had guarded from approach of foul deceit
A virtuous heart. Frown not on me, my lord;
The sacred claim of honour now demands
My interference. Yes; I will prevent,
As duty bids, the ruin of my child.

Edw. Her ruin, Bercher! Nay, but hear me speak.

Ber. I have already heard too much from thee.

Edw. Wilt thou then go?

Ber. Yes, from thee for ever.

Edw. And will Egvena say, for ever too?

Ber. She must; if not, I speak it in her name.

Edw. Dear, dear, Egvena.

Ber. Cease to importune;
For silence is her duty. Go, my child;
Elfrida waits within; prepare yourselves

This instant for departure. I have found
A faithful friend, who kindly will afford
Protection till the morning.

Edw. Can she go
To any place more safe than where she is?

Ber. Perhaps she cannot; but, decorum bids
Removal hence. Farewell, my lord, farewell.

[*Exit BERCHER and EGWINA.*]

Edw. Is't possible! refuse to hear me speak,
And like a tyrant urge his stern command
To close Egwin's lips! without a word,
The cruel fair one left me! Yet she looked
Compassionate, and heaved a tender sigh
When forced away. By heaven, he shall hear
The vindication of my innocence!
But wherefore hear? when royal Elfred comes,
His answer must decide. Had I been born
In low estate, as humble Sigebert,
I might, in full possession of my love,
Have been completely happy. Now my case
Is desperate; I'll cast the fatal die,
And on a father's tenderness depend:
Perhaps his heart will melt at my distress;
He may relent, and save a once-loved son.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.---*The Tent of GODRUN in the Danish Camp.*

GODRUN, HINGAR, HUBBA, and WHITGAR, at Table,
with Attendants.

God. Chieftains, I drink; say, who will be my pledge?

Hin. Lord of my life, behold my sword is drawn;
Sound trumpets, sound, while Denmark's monarch
drinks.

God. Success attend for ever Denmark's sons.
Hingar is next; fill out to him the bowl,
And let the smiling stream o'erflow the brim:
Drink deep, my friend, for Godrun is thy pledge.

Hin. Now let the trumpets sound a double charge,
And sound again. To Denmark's monarch, health.
Hubba, the bowl is thine, I am thy pledge.

God. Spare not, my lords; let the full cup go round.

Hub. The charge again: Destruction to our foes.

God. Bring forth more wine: Whitgar, thy turn
is next;

Receive the bowl, and drink, like mighty Thor,
A hero's draught. Hubba shall be thy pledge.

Whit. Great Odin, grant success to our emprise.

God. Where is the British bard?

Hub. My leave permits
 His egress hence ; another bard he seeks,
 In skill his equal ; jointly shall they sing
 The strains of triumph, when returned from war,
 To-morrow we indulge the festive rites.

God. So be it done ; for, songs of martial deeds
 Give zest to victory : but, Whitgar, say,
 Are our behests made known throughout the camp ?

Whit. Sufficient, gracious liege, was thy command,
 To make obedience certain on my part.
 The sons of Denmark wait, arrayed for war,
 The mandate of their king.

God. So far 'tis well :
 But secret still the cause, which calls to arms.

Whit. No whisper yet has reached the common
 ear,
 To give suspicion birth of our intent.

God. Sufficient force to guard the camp is all
 We leave behind ; the rest our emprise claims :
 Through yonder wood, with silent march, we'll pass,
 Before the rising moon displays her beams,
 To manifest our coming. What's the hour ?

Hin. The setting sun proclaims, the eighth is
 past.

God. Then, chieftains, time demands our vi-
 gilance.
 Each to his post : let not the business cool.

Hin. Come, Hubba ; for our bands are inter-mixed ;

The troops from Norway fall to Whitgar's charge.

God. My lords, farewell. Let Odin be the word.

[*Exeunt, HINGAR, HUBBA, WHITGAR, and Attendants.*]

The bourns of life once passed, to what strange shore,

On new-born pinions, shall our spirits fly ?

Uncertainty obscures the gloomy grave ;

For, who hath seen the son of death arise

From his cold mansion, truly to relate,

In future life, what's left to hope or dread ?

Religion speaks, 'tis true, of endless joys,

Of Odin's paradise, and swells with hope

The soldier's breast ; such superstitious faith

'Tis policy to urge ; for, like a spur,

It stimulates the youthful warrior's mind

To dreadless daring ; but this gilded hope,

Like shadows which pursue the evening sun,

Flits from my mind, and leaves it all involved

In clouds of doubt. Success, I trust, depends

Upon our swords alone, and valour binds

In adamant chains the fairy elf,

Which fools call fortune. If the deities

Prejudge the battle, and if fate exists

Decisive ere the conflict is begun,

What boots the soldier's toil? Away, vain thoughts;
The waking dreams of superstitious sloth,
Not worth enquiry. No; our swords are fate,
And best decide the fortune of the war.

[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Tent of EDWARD in the Saxon Camp.*

EDWARD, ELDOL.

Edw. The evening grows upon us ; time is ripe ;
But yet the king appears not.

Eld. Royal sir,
Before the stars of night illumine the sky,
(I speak with confidence,) our monarch comes.

Edw. I know not why suspicion haunts my mind
With groundless fears ; the evidence, produced
In favour of thy truth, was such, I own,
As might defy all doubt. Yet float my thoughts
In ceaseless agitation. Hope and fear
Prevail alternately. Swear now, I pray,
Swear by thy hope of future happiness,
Thou hast not swerved from truth ; I pray thee
swear.

Eld. Time, the ordeal of my faith, will prove.

Let future deeds redeem with usury.
 But one important question still remains :
 The lady I have seen ?

Edw. Upon my knees——

Elf. Arise, my son; to me that lady's worth
 Is not unknown : Egvinia is her name.

Edw. Egvinia known, my honoured lord, to thee ?

Elf. Yes ; and the love you bear her ; blameless
 both

Old Bercher and herself ; the fault was thine.
 Attachment, so unequal to thy birth,
 Sets prudence at defiance. Yet, so far
 Thine honour is engaged, no choice for me
 Is left to make ; I must perforce consent,
 Or Edward, if obedient, be unjust.

Edw. You bid me hope.

Elf. Be happy with thy bride !

Edw. Oh, best of fathers !

Elf. I once more forbid

These sudden transports ; for a while suspend
 The passions, nurtured in the school of love,
 Which oft relax the warrior's mighty mind,
 And murder by indulgence precious time,
 To deathless honour due : the present hour,
 Big with importance, gives thee all to arms ;
 For, England's future welfare now depends,
 Protecting heaven assisting, on her sons.

Edw. In strict obedience to thy high behest,
 I will suppress the bursting extacy
 Of gratitude, which swells my throbbing heart,
 And speak the soldier's language : nor, my lord,
 Conceive it arrogance, if I declare,
 The actions of this night shall clearly prove,
 From whom I am descended.

Elf. But seek not,
 By rash adventure, hastily to gain
 An empty fame ; thou must to valour add
 Just circumspection ; for, full oft 'tis found,
 Precipitation marches hand in hand
 With danger and destruction.—Some one comes.

Edw. It is lord Ethelred : he comes in haste ;
 And, doubtless, brings some tidings of import.

Enter ETHELRED.

Ethel. The Danish hordes, whose ravages of late
 Have filled the northern provinces with blood,
 Recalled to meet their monarch here encamped,
 Landed in Devon ; and with fire and sword
 Marked their destructive passage : Two days back
 The brave provincials met them in the field :
 The conflict was severe ; but conquest crowned
 The Saxon arms.

Edw. Who are the messengers ?

Ethel. The bold victorious bands themselves, who
 come

To share with us the labours of the field.—

But where is now the minstrel ?

Edw. Here behold

The friend of England ; here behold her king.

Ethel. All gracious heaven ! my royal master
here !

My lord, my liege, what can I, shall I, say ?

Astonishment and joy dilate my heart,

And words are all too feeble to express

My strong sensations.

Elf. Valiant chieftain, rise ;

Rise to my arms ; as England's faithful friend,

And Elfred's friend, I hold thee to my breast,

And own myself thy debtor.

Ethel. Honoured lord,

To see thee safe returned ; in health returned,

To lead our battles, and preserve the realm,

Rewards thy soldier's toil : with joy I hail

This hallowed hour, propitious of success,

Which gives thee to thy armies once again.

Cease then our sorrows, from the tear-swollen eye

Wipe the big drops, and throughout all the camp

Proclaim aloud, our monarch is returned.

Elf. Awhile forbear. The time is nearly ripe

For my appearance. Are the soldiery

Assembled all, and ready for the war ?

Ethel. All, under arms, await their king's com-
mand.

Elf. 'Tis well, my lord. Now with convenient speed

Assemble all the chieftains; first to them
Be my return made known; the common ear
Shall next receive the bruit. Go, my son,
Assist lord Ethelred, and in his tent
Appoint the council; there I come anon.

Edw. Come then, my lord; let no delay prevent
Fulfilment of our sovereign's high behest.

Ethel. My liege, we take our leave.

Elf. And farewell both:

If heaven so wills, we soon shall meet again.

[*Exeunt* EDWARD and ETHELRED.]

The valiant sons of England now in arms
Await the bloody conflict. Holy saints!
How awful is the intervening pause,
Which gives reflection scope, and sets afloat
Infinity of doubts! Oh! who shall say,
How wide the future slaughter may extend!
What streams of Christian blood may flow, before
The morning sun bears witness to the war!
The heart-appalling tyrant from his throne
Marks now, perchance, the victims of his rage;
And, stalking o'er the destined field of blood,
His ruthless ministers take early post,
Impatient of performance. Sacred Power,
To whom the fatal conflict must submit,
Look down in mercy on this suffering land!

—'Tis not to gratify ambitious pride,
 Or win the empty voice of worldly fame,
 We draw the sword. No ; in the scale opposed
 To shameful chains, lie all our souls hold dear,—
 Religion, laws, and native liberty,
 Life's choicest blessing. Hopeful of success,
 For justice, wretched kingdom, owns thy cause,
 We'll seek the battle ; and thou shalt be free,
 If freedom can be purchased by our blood.

{ *Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Platform before the Tent of ETHEL-
 RED, in the Saxon Camp.*

BILFRITH.

Bil. What mean these sudden movements in our
 camp ?

These frequent councils, and late call to arms ?
 Some dire event, with fate itself involved,
 Seems near at hand. Some emprise desperate,
 And desperate deeds become us to attempt,
 Woe-worn and famished, and forlorn of hope :—
 Speak, who comes there ?

Enter WULFSTAN, with a Guard.

Wul. The general's chosen guard.

Bil. Stop then, and give the word.

Wul. Success.

Bil. Advance ;

And may the word be ominous of joy !

Wul. Bilfrith, once more well met ; commissioned
here

To wait the high behest of Ethelred,
I bring my troops : fall back in order, friends,
And keep your ranks. Now, valiant Saxon, say ;
Shall peace or war preponderate in the scale ?

Bil. The tempest rises with too swift a wing,
Not hastily to fall.

Wul. We know the worst.

Bil. Is what ?

Wul. Is death.—

Bil. And dost thou hold
The loss of life so lightly ? Yes, to thee,
Yet unexperienced in the sacred joys
Of wedded love, the ghastly spectre wears
But half his terrors ; for, thou can'st not feel
The fond solicitude, which rends my heart,
Bound by a double tie. A virtuous wife
Bewails my absence, and three lovely babes,
The youngest in her arms, expect from me
Their daily sustenance. If I should fall——

Wul. Hold there ; nor let such melancholic
thoughts

Depress thy mind, nor by presagement add
Swift wings to woe.

Bil. Alas, poor innocents !

Wul. Nay, now, you weep ; and tears do ill become

A soldier's visage.

Bil. Wherefore ill become ?

Because a soldier, must I cease to be

A man ; and banish from my ruthless breast

The soft sensations of benevolence ?

Wul. Indulge thy silent sorrow.

Bil. I have done :

Nor think, because I have a tear for grief,

My valour is rebated.

Wul. Cursed be he,

That doubts thy courage. But, alas, my friend !

The Pagan hunters drive us to the toils,

And ruin grows upon us : all the realm,

Convulsed and torn by infidels, gives way ;

Old age and beauty, which for ever claim

Protection from the valiant ; innocence

In early life, and every sacred tie

Which binds humanity to feeling hearts,

Our ruthless foes despise. Nor can the shrine,

To saint-like virtue consecrate, escape ;

Nor hallowed altar, nor the sacred fane,

Where God is worshipped. But pollutions foul,

And murders, made by wanton cruelty,

More horrid and disgraceful, fill the land.

Bil. Give me your hand: when next we take
the field,

Let us remember, all our liberties
Depend on conquest. If we conquer not,
Be death our choice. But let us die like men,
Bearing our wounds before us.—Who comes there?

Enter EDRED, with Attendants.

Edr. Friends——

Bil. Friends, or foes, presume not to advance
Without the word.

Edr. Success.

Bil. Pass on, my friends.

Edr. Wulfstan, to haste add wings; for, no delay
Can stand excused: already on the march,
Our armies pass the postern to the east;
Join you with Conrad; in the vale below,
His troops are waiting: stop not to reply.

[Exeunt WULFSTAN and the Guard.]

Bilfrith, to thee this station is assigned;
Be Argus-eyed, lest danger should approach,
And ready to alarm; the present time
Is big with wonder. Royal Elfred lives,
And heads himself our armies, reinforced
By Saxon bands, full flushed with victory.
The battle joins; farewell, be vigilant.

[Exeunt EDRED, with his Attendants.]

Bil. Our monarch living, succours new arrived !
 So said he, and the sound of victory
 Gone forth among us. May the joyful sound
 Propitiously forerun victorious deeds,
 To be repeated ! Here I'll take my stand ;
 Comrades, fall back ; each man attend his post.

*Enter, from the Tent, BERCHER, EGVINA, and EL-
 FRIDA, with Attendants.*

Ber. Believe me, daughter, I am not deceived ;
 Our joys are real : with these eyes I saw
 My royal master ; and from Edward's mouth,
 Whose transports interrupted oft his speech,
 I learned, that, sanctioned by his sire's consent,
 He claims thee as his bride.

Eg. Why comes he not
 Himself, the welcome messenger of joy ?

Ber. Superior duties all thy Edward claim ;
 No time for trifling now.

Eg. For trifling, sir ?

Ber. Oh ! my Egvina, dearest only child,
 The fate of England hangs upon this hour.

Eg. The fate of England ?

Ber. Echo not my speech ;
 But give attention : Even now prepared
 In iron harness to provoke the war,
 Our Saxon forces stand, and in the air

Their banners wave, portentous of the fight :
In yonder plain they wait the king's command.

Eg. For what, my father ?

Ber. To march against the Danes.

This very hour, think, think, on that, my child,
Gives death or liberty to England's sons.

Eg. Alas ! my heart is sick. Say, best of fathers,
Where is the prince ; my Edward, where is he ?

Ber. To deathless glory gone ; a thousand men
Approved in war, and bearing on their shields
The trophies of their valour, Edward leads ;
Himself, in panoply of arms arrayed,
Pants for the battle. Silently and slow
I saw our armies move, and at their head
Great Elfred, like the fabled god of war,
With gloomy brow majestic, marked the way
For death himself to follow.—Heard you that ?

[*Cry within, Elfred, Elfred !*

Eg. Dear honoured father, wherefore was that
cry ?

Ber. The army shouts with joy around their
king :

Hark ! how the air re-echoes Elfred's name.
The battle is begun ; the shouts are loud ;
My soul is all in arms : from yonder hill,
I may, perchance, descry the distant field.

Eg. Oh ! leave us not, my father, leave us not.

Ber. Fear not, my child; anon I will return.

[*Exit BERCHER.*]

Eg. Oh! I am faint: I tremble every limb;
Look forth, my dearest friend; for I dare not,
And tell me what thou seest.

El. Ah me! ah me!

The moon, now bursting from surrounding clouds,
Beams on the distant armies. Shields I see,
And glittering swords uplifted, mow the air;
The shining helmets move—what clash of arms—
And now the noise increases. By my fears,
They come, they come, they pour upon the camp!

Eg. All, all is lost, and Edward is no more!

El. Fly then, oh, let us fly!

Eg. Ah! whither fly?

To death? the only friend the wretch can find.

El. The direful sounds increase upon the ear:
What outcries! what a din! protecting saints,
And guardian angels, save us! From the wood
See where another mighty army comes.

Eg. What barbarous shouts!

El. Egvina, woe is me!

The Saxons fly, and from the fatal wood
The torrent rolls, resistless in its course.

Enter BERCHER.

Ber. Daughter, rejoice; the infidels give ground;
Justice asserts her cause; our arms prevail.

El. What forces saw we rushing from the wood?

Ber. A chosen band, by noble Edward led,
From latent ambush. Hark, my children, hark!
The conquering sons of England shout aloud;
The woods, the mountains, echo to their cries.

Eg. And does my Edward live?

Ber. Oh! doubt it not;
And will anon triumphantly return,
To lay his laurelled trophies at thy feet.

Eg. Protecting angels, watch the warrior's way!
Shield him from danger, turn the flying death
When aimed at him, and grant him safe return.

[*Within*, They fly, they fly!]

Ber. Hark, hark, what sound is that?

Eg. Who flies, my lord?

Ber. The ruthless infidels, our fiercest foes,
All routed and confused: see, where they urge
Their speedy flight.——

[*Within*, Victory! Victory!

——Oh, joyful sound!

Now from her native heaven shall Peace descend,
To walk with us, and Plenty by her side,
To bless the rustic's toil. He, unalarmed
By war's rude clamour, shall with cheerful heart
Warble his early matins, as he tills
The yielding glebe; returning joy shall crown
The festive board, and hospitality,
Long lost to us, revive her languid head.

Enter EDRED, and BILFRITH.

Edr. The companies, relieved from early watch,
Are known to thee ; select them for the field ;
Some great emprise the prince atchieves even now,
Which may demand assistance.

Bil. I obey. *[Exit BILFRITH.]*

Eg. Said he the prince, my father ?

Ber. Even so. .

I will enquire :—what enterprise, my lord,
Demands the presence now of England's heir ?

Edr. The woodland passes first his ambuscade
Secured ; and, falling thence upon the rear
Of Godrun's army, cut off all retreat,
And made our conquest sure ; when suddenly
The victor bands regained the distant woods,
And in the umbrageous covert disappeared ;
Their purpose still unknown.

Eg. More I would ask——

Edr. Excuse me, fairest lady, nor impute
To rudeness, what necessity requires ;
The present hour admits of no delay.

[Exit EDRED.]

El. Hark, hark ! my cousin. My foreboding fears
Deceive me, or the frightful din of war
Is now renewed.

Ber. It is ; but more remote.

El. I hear the clash of swords, and distant shouts.

Ber. Be silent, cousin. Now they die away,
And now, in quick succession, rise again.

El. See, from the woods what bright illumined
clouds

Ascend the sky ; and now the perfect blaze,
O'ertops the tallest trees ; tremendous sight !
The wood is all on fire.

Ber. What can this mean ?
She fables not ; the flames are large and wide :
Be not alarmed, I soon shall know the cause.

[*Exit BERCHEN*]

Eg. Dearest Elfrida, I am ill at ease ;
Lend me thy friendly arm, my spirits fail,
And all the dreadful horrors of suspense
Seize on my soul ; where 'is my lord the prince ?
Can no one tell, if Edward—Hah ! what's that ?

*Enter two or three Soldiers, leading a wounded Man,
bloody.*

El. Be not affrighted ! Soldiers from the field
Lead forth a wounded man, imbrued with blood.

Eg. How dreadful is this omen !

El. Suffer not
The gloom of wayward fancy to impose
Addition to the fears, which justice grants
May be indulged.—What tidings bring you, sirs ?

Eg. They shake their heads, and weep, and answer
not.

Oh then, 'tis true, and I am lost indeed !

El. Help, maidens, help ! she faints, unfold the tent,
And bear her gently forwards. So, 'tis well !

*[The Attendants bear her into the Tent, and
ELFRIDA follows.]*

SCENE III.—*An open Space in the Saxon Camp.*

EDRED, WULFSTAN.

Edr. The tales of yore, with warlike wonder filled,
May well demand our credence, who have seen
The matchless deeds that Elfred has performed,
And his brave son.

Wul. Oh ! 'twas a noble thought
To fire the Danish camp, and in their nest
Destroy the hornets. How the rising blaze
Illumed the woods, and streaming through the air,
Proclaimed the prince's valour and success.

Edr. Peace. See, the king approaches——

*Enter ELFRID, ETHELRED, and the other Saxon
Chieftains, with their Army. GODRUN, HINGAR,
and the Leaders of the Danes, in Chains.*

Elf. All gracious heaven ! impressed with warmest
sense

Of heart dictated gratitude, we bow
Before thy throne, and own thy boundless power.
To you, brave victor chieftains, next I turn ;
Your fair deserts claim all that praise can give,

And would make poor e'en royalty itself
 To portion due reward. Your country saved
 From her death's wound, your liberties restored,
 Are honours which unsullied shall adorn
 Your deathless names, and from posterity,
 Demand just admiration.—

Bring forth the captives. See the dire effects
 Of broken treaties, Godrun. On thy head
 Devolves the ruin, barbarously aimed
 At this unhappy land. In justice, say,
 What is from us expected?

God. Death, at least,
 With torture added : Hatred and contempt !
 We scorn the worst ; and are prepared to meet
 Extremity of vengeance. Call the headsman.

Elf. Not so, remorseless Dane ; the Christian seeks
 In charity to save ; enough of blood
 Has drenched our swords already. You believe,
 The gods, you worship, glory in revenge :
 Our God delights in mercy.

God. Where's the proof ?
 Thou durst not, haughty Saxon, grant us life.

Elf. I dare do more, to life add liberty.

God. Where is the boasted power of Denmark's
 gods ?

Can they permit us to become the scoff
 Of Christian infidels, whom most they hate ?

Elf. 'Tis superstition gives them all their power,
And fancy, their existence.

God. So it seems ;
And chance, blind chance, is mistress of the globe.

Elf. Be not deceived ; the voice of truth declares,
That he, who made the world, directs its course :
Forsake your idol gods ; unite with us
In faith and friendship ; then, with brothers' love,
To fair possessions you shall be received,
And welcomed to the land : such as refuse
These gentle terms——

Hin. Accursed be the terms :
I do refuse them, Saxon ; let me know
The utmost consequence, and spare me not.

Elf. Expulsion from this island, haughty Dane ;
And death, if on its shores, in future time,
Thou should'st be found.

Hin. Yet, ere I leave the land,
Permit me (Piety demands it,) to entomb
My brothers breathless corse ; I ask no more !

Elf. Whate'er the dead may claim, perform in
peace.

Godrun, to thee I turn.

God. I'm half convinced ;
But yet, reflection needs some moments more.

Elf. Full time, and full instruction, shalt thou have ;
Look to your prisoners, guards, with such respect,

As may alleviate, at least, the weight
Of necessary bondage.

[The Danes are led from the Stage.]

Ethel. With sullen brow, they stalk away abashed,
Nor seem to think their lives deserving thanks.

Elf. Disgrace, and chains, are evils ill endured,
By warlike minds.—But see, where Edward comes.

*Enter EDWARD, leading EGVINA; BERCHER, and EL-
FRIDA, following with Attendants.*

Rise, Edward; thou hast well deserved our praise:
Fair lady, kneel not. Edward, take her hand,
And love her well, for she deserves thy love.
Brave Bercher, welcome, welcome to thy friend:
Beneath thy banner I have often fought,
When young in arms, and learned first from thee,
The duties of a soldier. Nay, think not,
That absence has abated ought of love.
Give me thy hand; and let our wishes join
For England's welfare. May her valiant sons,
By conquest glorified, when war demands
The bloody conflict, make the blessings sure
Of future peace; and in her fair domain
May undegenerated freedom take
Deep root, and flourish, and for ever bloom.

[Exeunt.]



GLOSSARY.



GLOSSARY.

A.

Abashed, used as discomfited, agitated.

Abet, assist.

Aby, abuy or purchase.

Accoiled, hustled together, crowded.

Adad, an exclamation ; in faith, in troth.

Adawed, affrighted, daunted.

Aguisement, attire.

Afray, v. frighten.

Albe, although.

Algutes, nevertheless, for all that.

Amated, terrified, struck with horror.

Arede, to advise, direct.

Arcead, to advise.

Arraught, arrested, caught.

Askance, awry.

Assay, attempt, attack.

Avengement, punishment, vengeance.

Avise, (aviser Fr.) to counsel.

Award, *Awardment*; adjudge, adjudgment.

Awhaped, alarmed, daunted.

B.

Baldrick, a girdle.

Bandog, a dog usually tied up.

Barley-break, a childish game.

Baselard, a dagger or wooden knife.

Bassinet, a kind of helmet.

Bate, v. (a term in falconry,) when a hawk is said to bate, he leaves the game. Contracted also from abate.

Baudekin, a cloth of gold tissue, with figures in silk, for female dress.

Bay, to bark.

Bedight, equipt, dressed.

Benempt, called, named.

Betide, befall.

Bewrayed, betrayed, discovered.

Bickermments, quarrelling.

Bonnet, to veil the bonnet, to do reverence; *Toss in*
the air, a token of delight.

Bording, teizing, troubling.

Borrel, boorish; from boor, a clown.

Bosket, thicket.

Brand, *Brand iron*, a sword.

Bren, burn.

Burly, adj. great of stature, bulky, tumid.

C.

Cark, misfortune, woe.

Carl, a churl.

Certes, assuredly, doubtless.

Chevesail, a gorge.

Chevisaunces, achievements, feats.

Clary, claret.

Coat-hardy, an upper garment.

Cockerell, a young cock, metaphorically, a sprightly
youth.

Con, to cast up, to reckon, also to learn.

Conning, knowledge.

Conteke, contention.

Cour, to sneak, to crouch.

Courpie, in womens dress, a short vest.

Couthly, *couthful*, skilfully.

Costard, the head, also a sort of apple.
Craking, or *Creaking*, talking, boasting.
Crease, a trench in the ground.

D.

Dareindo, hardihood, daring-feat.
Deft, *Defly*, dexterous, skilful skillfully.
Dempt, deemed, supposed.
Derseignment, overture, application.
Disguisement, dress of concealment.
Disport, entertainment.
Dissour, a professional story teller.
Doff, to put off.
Dorture, the common room, where friars in a convent sleep.
Doughty, stout.
Drent, drenched.
Dreriment, sorrow.
Durance, the stuff used in female dress now termed
 Durant.

E.

Eftsoons, presently.
Eke, also.

Empeach, prevent.

Emprise, undertaking.

Encounter, but that.

Encheson, occasion, cause, reason.

F.

Falsing, cheating, deceiving.

Fay, by my fay; faith, by my faith.

Faytor, a doer.

Feer, companion.

Fit, a fit of music, a piece or stave.

Fordone, undone.

Foined, pushed, as in fencing.

Forefend, hinder, prevent.

Forehint, seized.

Forethink, to repine.

Forsay, v. predict.

For-worn, much worn, worn out.

G.

Gage, v. wager, throw down the gauntlet.

Gainsay, thwart, contradict, deny.

Gambason, a kind of proof coat for the body.

Gauded, adorned, mounted, or set as jewels.

Geer, goods and chattels, also stuff.

Gree, taste, feelings, also reward.

Giglet, a light wench.

Gipsire, a pouch. Anciety the womens pockets were worn outside of the dress, and were formed of such durable stuff as leather, &c. and much ornamented.

Gisarme, a halberd with two points or pikes.

Glave, a sword.

Guerdon, reward.

Guise, habit, condition.

H.

Hardiment, bravery.

Hest, command.

Hight, called, entitled, also ordered.

Hilding, a paltry fellow.

Hinderlin, one behind in his duty.

Hippocras, wine brewed with spices.

Holidam, the Virgin.

Howlet, an owl.

Hosen, hose, stockings.

Huffcap, strong English ale : so called from its effects when too liberally taken.

Hyke, a kind of cloak.

J.

Jape, joke.

Joyance, pleasure, enjoyment.

K.

Ken, v. know.

Kirtle, an upper garment, a gown.

Kestrel, a hawk.

Knackeries, toys, baubles.

L.

Leasings or *Leesings*, lies, falsehood, deceit.

Leech, a doctor.

Leer, learning.

Leman, sweetheart, mistress.

Lett, hinder, stop.

Leven, lightning.

Lout, v. to bow or cringe,

Lout, s. a booby.

Lozel, a lazy fellow.

Lurdane, a dull heavy fellow, a drone in society.

Lustihood, courage, vigour.

M.

Makalent, angry mood.

Main angry, very angry.

Mainly, considerably.

Misprize, mistake.

Misweening, misunderstanding.

Mured, shut up within walls.

N.

Nathless, nevertheless.

Noyous, ad. unhappy.

Nonce, purpose, intent, design.

Noyance, hurt, injury.

Nurtured, educated, instructed.

O.

Overcrow, insult.

P.

Paravaunt, perhaps, peradventure.

Peark, brisk.

Perdie, (an oath) by heaven.

Pell, a wooden post.

Pelt, skin.

Peregal, or *Paregal*, equal.

Pight, fixed.

Portaunce, bearing, carriage, behaviour.

Prow, more *prow*, of more prowess, valiant.

Purfled, embroidered.

Q.

Quell, to foil, to kill.

Quaint, extinguished.

Quiddity, a quick or subtle question.

Quintain, (Fr.) a post with a turning top. The game of Quintain was played thus. An upright post was fixed in the ground, on the top of which a cross post turned upon a pin; at one end there

was a broad board, and at the other a heavy sand bag; the play was to ride against the broad end with a lance, and escape before the sand bag coming round should strike you.

R.

Reckless, heedless, careless.

Rede, advice, counsel.

Rochet, a lawn garment resembling a surplice gathered at the wrists.

Roister, a boisterous fellow.

Royne, to bite or gnaw.

S.

Samite, a kind of cloth.

Say or *Sey*, a thin silken stuff.

Scath, or *Scathe*, hurt, injury.

Sconce, head, pate.

Seely, silly, ignorant.

Selcouth, strange, wonderful.

Sheen, shining, fair.

Snaffle, a horse's bit without a curb.

Sooth, truth, reality.

Soothlike, very probably, truly.

Souwenance, knowledge.

Sickerly, surely.

Sicker, sure, secure, still used in Scotland in this sense.

Simmel, a cake or bun, made of fine flour.

Silhence, since.

Stalworth, stout, brave.

Stammel, a coarse stuff for female dress.

Stark, entirely.

Steven, outcry, uproar.

Stound, s. time, period.

Stint, v. cease, stop.

Stower, condition, situation.

Subversed, overturned.

Supertunic, upper coat; *Roquelaure*, fr.

Swashbuckler, a braggadocio.

T.

Tarantine, a silken stuff for dress.

Thwittle, a knife.

Tregetour, a juggler.

Trow, v. concieve, think.

Trowle, pass about, as in drinking.

Tunic, a coat, upper garment.

Twitten, to blame.

U.

Uncase, undress.

Uneathly, uneasily,

Unmurtured, untutored, ignorant.

Upbraying, upbraiding.

V.

Vail, to succumb, to knock under.

Verilay, or *Virelay*, a rustic song, or measure.

Volupure, a kind of female head-dress, or envelope
of cloth for the head.

W:

Waesheal, wassell, carousal.

Watchet-coloured, pale blue.

Wayment, distress, unfortunate circumstances.

Weird-woman, a witch.

Ween, v. to think.

Wend, v. to go.

Weeten, wishing, greeting.

Whittle, a knife, also *Thwittle*.

Wighly, courageously.

Wimple, an ancient hood and veil, used indiscriminately by both sexes, but chiefly by women.

Wis, *Wist*, know, knew.

Wode, mad.

Wonne, v. to reside.

Wot. v. to be sensible of.

Y.

Y'clad, dressed, clothed.

Yfrowns, frowns.

Yshent, blamed, scolded.

Yshriven, confessed and absolved.

Ywis, I wis, I know.

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